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Praching

Christus Consolator:

The Pulpit in Relation to Social Life.

BY

Alexander MacLeod, D.D.,

Author of "Our own Lives the Books of Judgment," etc.

"I prayed to God that He would baptize my heart into the sense of all conditions, so that I might be able to enter into the needs and sorrows of all."—GEORGE FOX.



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PREFACE.

A VARIETY of causes combine in this country, at present, to advance some of the most difficult among the social problems to the foreground of practical thought. What follows is an attempt to consider the help which the Christian preacher, acting within his own vocation, may bring to their solution.

No depreciation of other forms of help is intended. The gospel not only sympathizes with every endeavour, on levels lower than its own, to deal with the evils in social life; it also scatters the seeds of such endeavours wherever it is proclaimed. But at a time when some are avowing loss of confidence in the efficacy of the gospel, and some are advocating as remedies what can only touch the surface of our social ailments, it may be allowed to one who believes the gospel to be the supreme and radical remedy, to indicate the services which may be rendered to society, and which over and over again have been rendered, by a faithful application of its principles from the pulpit.

In working out his design, the writer has been cheered by the thought, that he might possibly be the means of placing before his younger brethren in the ministry an enlarged view of the interests entrusted to their care. Amid the tumult of new forces in society, and the self-asserting voices of this strange new time, the preacher is often driven back on his primary work, and tempted to restrict himself to the conversion of individual souls. And sometimes, in remote and lonely spheres especially, he will say, "In this immense task of healing the nation, of what value is my vocation? Among those roaring tides of social and political agitation, what is the still small voice I utter worth?" What the writer of the following pages has tried to do, is to meet this sinking of heart by a survey of some of the social purposes for which the ministry of the word exists, and a glance at the variety and power of the truths by whose light those purposes are to be fulfilled.

Birkenhead,

September, 1870.

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CHRISTUS CONSOLATOR.

PART FIRST.

“When He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.”

Religion now governs and directs civil order only indirectly, and according to the measure of its influence ; and the preacher is placed in a corresponding position. Society does not recognise its real chief. But it must be, that the most grave and solemn moments, in individual and public life, will belong to religion and consequently to him ; that a number of weighty interests will constantly be entrusted to him ; that the lowest deeps of the human spirit will be opened up to him by that religious power which is the strongest of all powers. Always his hour returns.

VINET.

CHRISTUS CONSOLATOR.

I.

Social Work

THE SOCIAL MISSION OF THE PULPIT.

"I do not ask the clergy to make the persons they influence either Republicans or Royalists; but I wish they would more frequently let them hear of the ties which attach them to the great human society in which God has placed them. I wish they would instil into the very souls of their hearers, that every one belongs much more to the collective being than he does to himself; . . . and that every one is bound to work out and watch over its prospects. And they should be careful not to enervate some of our noblest instincts, by treating indifference to the public weal as a sort of languid virtue."—*De Tocqueville*.

WE are at present in the current of a philanthropic movement. All eyes are directed to the life and sufferings of the poor. Benevolent men are banded together to study the sources of these sufferings, and the laws to which they are subject. Associations for alleviating them are multiplying in the land. Meetings are annually convened, at which humane people interchange ideas, and stir each other up to be helpers of social progress. The public mind is supplied with facts, hitherto neglected or unknown, and with just and merciful views of those facts. Seeds of

a better state of things are sown. The fragments of sympathy and benevolent thought, scattered throughout the country, are brought together and massed. And assaults are made on the evils in our social life with all the advantage which weight and organization can impart ; and, if not avowedly with Christian aims, almost always in the drift of these aims.

What I intend to consider is the relation of the pulpit to this movement. I believe that it belongs to the Christian preacher to deal with the problems which are handled by these societies ; that he, and he supremely, among social workers, has the true solution of them in his keeping ; and that, all admirable though those societies are, they cannot reach their aims except by the aid which only the pulpits of the land can supply.

The temptation of the Church is to demit what belongs to the regeneration of society in her functions, and abandon to these outlying organizations a burden which the Lord has laid chiefly upon herself. It is the duty of those who occupy her pulpits to resist this temptation, and amid the very movements which lead to it, and in the very sphere in danger of being abandoned, to make full proof of the power of their ministry.

No society can be organized by the philanthro-

pists, nor any combination of societies, which shall be able to bring to social work the vital force, the sympathies, the reach of aim, the radical thoroughness of method, with which a really roused and earnest Church is already equipped. It is the abiding task of her preachers to feed the sources from which this equipment springs, to widen and deepen her social sympathies, to keep her conscience quick to her proper work among the people, and to encourage every Christian endeavour to accomplish that work.

The natural movement of a healthy Church is towards social work. Her life, like her Master's, is to be going about doing good. The test of sincerity in her love to the Master, is love to the brethren. The test of fidelity, awaiting her members at the day of judgment, is feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and the imprisoned. And the grandest part of her worship upon earth, her ceremonial, her true liturgic service, is visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction. I wish to advocate in the functions of the gospel ministry, a correspondence with these functions and purposes of the Church. True preaching not only recognises them, but fits itself into the obligations they impose. It aims at promoting, directing, and raising the natural

movement and social work of the Church to their greatest possible height.

Not long ago, a minister of the gospel in London, writing to one of the weekly papers, and dealing with only one of the several problems which are at the doors of benevolent thought at present, startled the Christian public with the statement, that the religious edifices of the country "are systematically avoided by the generality of both skilled and unskilled workmen;" and that, after all the efforts of the last fifty years, there is still "a whole nation outside the churches, living by the light, or darkness, of quite different ideas, on whom the existing agencies are producing but a scarcely appreciable effect."

Statements like this put existing methods of dealing with the life of the poorer classes on their defence. What light can these methods shed on the pressing question, How shall we turn this whole nation outside to God? and, With what powers are they furnished to penetrate the gloom in which so many of our fellow-countrymen are spending their days? But the principle pressure is on preaching. Why are these classes outside of its influence? Has the pulpit lost its ancient hold on the people? Has the right hand of the preacher forgot its cunning? Or is there

no balm, in the message he delivers, for the sores which are festering in the lives of the poor? And has it come to this in England, that well-dressed congregations are meeting, and preachers preaching, in every town and hamlet throughout the country, while this 'whole nation outside'—the hard-working, much-enduring, little-enjoying, manual toilers of society—are left uncared for in the gloom?

Amid many suggestions which such statements call forth, and many voices of earnest men recommending this and that, I venture here to declare still, and with unabated confidence, for the old instrumentality of Gospel preaching.

Men run to and fro, and up and down, in their anxiety to mend the world, just as in earlier times. In their impatience of the evils in the lot of particular classes they utter the cry, Who shall bring heaven down into debasements like these? Who, out of such awful depths, shall bring light and healing into the lives their inhabitants are leading? The reply to this despair, now as in the days of Paul, is nearer than men think. It is not in the height, nor in the depth, but in a possession we already know—in "the word of faith which we preach."¹ What we call "the elevation of the masses," "the reclamation of the fallen," "the

¹ Rom. x. 7, 8.

amelioration of society," "the excavation of our home heathen," is but a portion of our greater world-wide work, the christianizing of the human race. In this work, there can be no difference of instrumentality between the accomplishment of the whole and the part. For far and near, for rich and poor, for workmen and for employers, for men and for nations, there is but one power under heaven which can bring us to the better time. That is the power which resides in the gospel of Christ. To unfold that gospel, to bring its gladness rightly into contact with the hearts and consciences of the people, is the high task assigned to the Christian preacher. It is also, now as before, the nearest and surest method of attaining this special good of bringing the classes, who are still outside, into the Church; and beyond that, of leavening all social life with the life of Christ.

Mankind can only travel toward perfection in the light of the Divine purpose and God's way of reaching that purpose. And these lie in the gospel, and only there, waiting to be expounded by its ministers. It is this fact which invests preaching with its supreme worth as a means of acting on social life. "The Christian Idea is the future of the world."¹ Whatever dream of a better state of

¹ Chateaubriand.

things we can cherish for the race, the germs of it, the means of accomplishing it, and at last the dream itself, will be found already there.

When Orsted first exhibited to Frederika Bremer the beautiful, and now familiar experiment, of sand grains upon a glass-plate arranging themselves, under the influence of a musical note, in symmetrical and harmonious figures, this reflection passed through the mind of the lady: "A human hand made the stroke which produced the note. But when the stroke is made by the hand of the Almighty, will not the note then produced bring into exquisitely harmonious form those sand-grains which are human beings, communities, nations? It will arrange the world in beauty, and there shall be no discord, and no lamentation any more."¹ This very "stroke made by the hand of the Almighty," this Divine all-powerful musical note, is the pure and full preaching of the gospel of Christ.

I believe that every word uttered in the pulpit is fitted, and was intended to have an ultimate bearing on the welfare of society. In the great textbook the individual is represented as existing for society, and the conversion of souls as the mere beginning of the preacher's work.

¹ "Homes of the New World," vol. ii., p. 140.

I am aware of a sentiment which runs counter to this conviction. I have listened to good men saying that "the mission of the Christian ministry was to the soul alone, that it lay up on the heights of conscience and of God, that the kingdom they were called to build was the kingdom within the man, that the world for which they laboured was the world to come." But I refuse to accept these statements, these half-views, as the full exhibition of the task to which ministers of the gospel have devoted their lives. Although our method is the manifestation of the truth of God to the conscience, our work does not therefore lie upon some far height, where the cries of them 'who cry for being overcome' are never heard, but down where men live, and amid the struggles and sufferings of the work-a-day world. And we labour for ends, some of which, at least, are to have their realization on earth. As much as the old prophets were, we are set "over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to build, and to plant." As much as our Lord, we are here to proclaim a kingdom of heaven at hand. I cannot understand that there should be any hurt in social life, and the Christian minister pass it by in his work. If the eyes of some humane preacher have been opened to the wounds in society, it is opposed to

the very idea of his vocation, that he should have to pass to some platform outside, before he can utter the word which, as a fire, is burning in his heart. The pulpit is the home of the truth which alone can bless society. It is the watch-tower from which the preacher surveys the whole life of man. He should hold himself free to speak "the whole counsel of God," and all the words of a message which covers, in its exceeding breadth, both individual and social life.

In this great work there should be no mere beating of the air. As much waste of energy flows from aimless as from minced preaching; and very nearly as much from shutting out of view any of the purposes which God means to be fulfilled. The plea I am urging is the recognition of the social purposes of preaching. But I imply no exaltation of these purposes over others, nor any depreciation of any other department of the gospel ministry. And very especially, in all I have to say, I shall imply the antecedent and right fulfilment of those purposes which fall to be worked out by the gospel in the kingdom of the soul.

In the end, it is Christ I shall hope to have commended. I know no help for man as an individual, or for men in society, but Christ. He is the true healer, builder-up, and liberator. I

want to show what consolations, what encouragements, what balm, lie for the sons of men in His gospel. I want to display the resources, the potencies, the principles, the motives which lie in this gospel for social life ; and how if, on the one side, there be poverty, failure, depression, and ignorance in the land,—there is, on the other side, in our possession, a power of God to deal with them, a gospel in which are hid treasures of joy and health and liberty,—ideals which beckon us all up to God, and inducements to consecrate our lives to their pursuit.

* * * *

In dealing with this subject, we can wish for no better light than that which shines from the passage in Luke, which describes our Lord's first preaching at Nazareth. "And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up : and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And there was delivered unto Him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written, *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor ; He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To*

preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And He closed the book, and He gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him. And He began to say unto them, *This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.*"¹

Whatever the humane people of the present day have to say on social sufferings and remedies, it can only be reflections and gleams of what is comprehended in essence here. As I read these old words of Isaiah, which our Lord took for His text, the centuries seem to fall away from our feet. The evils they deal with are with us still. The people they bring before us surround us wherever we turn. And here, in the old words, is the healing for their woes, the way out of their debasements, the Divine and perfect way, from everything in our social life which vexes us, to the peace and good intended for us in the heart of God.

It is not without significance, that our Lord repaired to the synagogue rather than the temple with the first announcements of the glad tidings. Whatever spiritual vitality remained in the nation was to be found there.² And taking, as He there

¹ Luke iv. 16-21.

² "The religion of the country came thus to be mainly fed and directed from the synagogue. The religious leader was not now the priest, or the prophet, but the rabbi. The Jews

did, the position of an expounder of Scripture, He at once preluded that greatest ordinance of His kingdom, the preaching of the gospel, and illustrated the uses to which it should be put.

How vividly the mere external circumstances in which our Lord was placed, come back to us! It is Nazareth among the Galilean hills. We know the scene almost as well as if it had been a valley in our native land—so many travellers have used their eyes for us, and brought back pictures of what they saw. We know the quiet valley among the hills, the town climbing up the one side, the steep narrow streets, the white terra-cotta houses, the fountain which supplies the town with water, the green plateau which makes its foreground, and the enclosing hills from the heights of which the

were become, to use the Mahometan phrase, a people of the book. . . . Moses had “them that preached him in every city.” A thorough parochial system of synagogue instruction occupied the whole country; religion had become a literature, its ministers men of letters, its instruction was the popular book-education. . . . The Lord, finding in existence such a system as we have described, a system deriving its origin from such plain considerations of fitness to an end—neither withstood it, nor made doubtful the sufficiency of its sanction by superadding the force of direct enactment in its favour; but recognised its usefulness as its authority, availed Himself of all its resources, and poured abroad His Divine wisdom through its channels.”—Prof. A. J. SCOTT, *First Principle of Church Government*.

Lord could see, stretching on every side, glimpses of the world He came to redeem; and from the lower cliffs of which He was so soon to have a foretaste of the cross. What is a little town now was a mere village then, and so utterly unknown, that neighbours could say of it, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Such as it was, it was there He had passed His boyhood, and grown up to manhood; and this is His first appearance as a preacher to those who dwelt in it. How well known, and yet also how little known, He was to those who were that day to hear Him! In how few of them was there the throbbing of hearts which had been waiting and praying for the consolation of Israel! As they straggled on towards the synagogue, along the steep and narrow streets, the narrow village heart would, no doubt, express itself in significant looks and doubtful shakings of the head. From other places they had heard of their townsman. Elsewhere He had done wonderful works, and spoken wonderful words. The "fame of Him" had been passing from ear to ear "through all the region round about." To-day they were to see and hear for themselves. "The eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened upon Him." Yes! we can all imagine that scene. It is a strange

moment for us always, when some familiar object discloses a hidden and unsuspected worth. To the villagers of Nazareth the moment was very strange. Was not this the carpenter? Was it not Joseph's son? Had they not seen Him daily all those bypast years? Had they not known Him since He was a child? He had climbed their streets, had gone down to their well, had wandered among their hills, had gone out and in among their vineyards and cornfields just as themselves had done. And lo! to-day, He comes before them as a prophet, and more.

To Him, also, who was the object of this wonder, it must have been a solemn moment. It is hardly possible to think of the inner circumstances in which He was placed, and fail to see that this was one of those moments in His life in which the consciousness of what He was, and what He had come to do, must have glowed intensely in His soul. In the presence of that array of familiar faces, He must have felt that He was more to those who gazed at Him than a mere kinsman and neighbour's son. This was the beginning of His ministry; and the message He had come to deliver was not to this village alone but to the world. That little company, narrow though their hearts may have been, had to listen

that day for the whole race. It was to man, as man, and to all men, and for all times and countries, this Preacher had come to preach. Of one thing we may be sure : He was not one to forget—that, in the most literal and human sense, He was a kinsman and neighbour's son. Wide though His words may range, He will shape them, first of all, for the ears of actual Nazareth. Not indifferent to Him are the human ties which bind Him to that company. If Mary was in the audience, the most true son-love welled out from His heart towards hers. But He stands there in the consecration of more sacred and wider ties. Whosoever shall do the will of His Father, is Nazareth, native land, mother, brother, and sister to Him. He came to Nazareth as the universal Kinsman. He is the Saviour and Lord of men—the Healer and Regenerator of human society. It is in this capacity He stands up to preach. And for such a speaker, and in such circumstances, there can be but one subject. It is the gospel of the Kingdom He has come to establish among men,—the glad tidings and truth of God concerning man and society.

In the synagogue service there were fixed portions of Scripture for every day ; but we do not gather from the narrative, that He turned for His

text to the portion for the day. "When He had opened the book, He found." The book opened, and the right word was before Him. In any book of the Old Testament it might have happened so; in the book of the prophet Isaiah it could hardly fail to happen. His prophecies are full of Christ, and full of representations of Him as the King and Healer of society. The reader presses the surface at any point, and the living waters come up. A more fitting word, than the one chosen by our Lord, could hardly have presented itself to His view. It is part of the long and magnificent prophecy of the Messiah as the SERVANT which the later prophecies contain. And it is a passage which carries us into the very heart of the social side of His own, and of all Christian work. Of the Lord's sermon, only one sentence has been preserved: "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." But it is a sentence which suggests and reveals the whole. He would travel along the lines of Divine consolation opened up by Isaiah, and present Himself on each as its fulfilment. Himself was the Servant by whom God was to regenerate society. Folded up in Him, in His life and doctrine, in His death and resurrection, and in the Spirit by whom he had been anointed, lay all the principles of social science and

work, all the high purposes of human love, all the elements of true fellowship for men, and all the Divine secrets by which men are to be gathered out of their isolations and miseries, and built up into a kingdom of God upon earth. The substance of the sermon is therefore expressed in the one recorded sentence. Christ was the fulfilment of Isaiah's words. His exposition was a sermon for society, and on Himself as man's Redeemer and King. It was the "gospel of the kingdom," which He had been preaching in the surrounding towns; and the same which He has bequeathed to His preachers to be their light and hope in the task of regenerating society. What He Himself came to do for society, what His successors were to do after He ascended,—this is its theme. I might describe it as an outline drawn by the Master's hand of the social work of the pulpit. The aims, the methods, the sympathies of the preacher, are mentioned or implied in His text. The boons which suffering men require,—the glad tidings, healing, deliverance, and light,—the Christian preacher will find them here. With hands filled with these boons, he is sent to every point where human suffering shows itself, and commissioned to offer his boons over the wide world of human woe. He is sent forth, not as a voice

crying in the wilderness, but as a life and power of life,—an ambassador and representative to men of the living, present, though unseen King.

No words can be too explicit to set forth this element in preaching to which I have just alluded. It is not truth alone—it is not earnestness alone—it is not multiplication of workers alone, good though all these things in their own places are, on which the success of preaching depends. It is also—it is pre-eminently—the presence, in the word and work of the preacher, of Christ Himself. The preacher speaks for a King who is as actually present to see and bless the multitudes in this country now, as when He looked on the multitudes in Judea, and had compassion on them, eighteen hundred years ago, because they were as sheep without a shepherd.

Our Lord appropriated to Himself the old words: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach." It is strength to those who are His preachers to remember, that the oneness which is between Christ and His servants, makes the words true for us as for Him. This day, in this country, and in the circumstances in which we ourselves are placed, in relation to the poor and the bruised, Isaiah's words wait to be fulfilled. The anoint-

ing of our Aaron flows down His beard, and to His skirts. This is the consecration of Christian preachers, that they have been set apart to their work by the very Spirit who was in Christ. It is in the power of that Spirit they are to go forth and speak. And they may well speak in hope. God does not mean the social life of our country to welter on, in the sloughs and abysses where it is befouled at present. Our true King has sent us forth with glad tidings to those who suffer. The ills which afflict them are not to crush human hearts for ever. In the loving purposes of Heaven, the beginning of their end has come. "The Lord reigneth : let the earth be glad." Already "the kingdom of God is in the midst of us." The Spirit of the Lord is upon us, that we may declare this blessed fact. From His unseen throne in the heavens, Christ is calling us to our task. Oh that the consciousness of our great vocation might glow in us, as in Him at Nazareth ! Oh that we might receive grace to fix our eyes earnestly on the woes and sorrows of the poor, and stand forth, in the anointing of His Spirit, with the glad tidings concerning Him on our lips ! Then might we take the high part assigned to us in the great social task—to which, not we alone, but the whole Christian Church are called—of leading the poor,

the lost, and the ignorant up out of their debasements and sufferings, and setting open for them the gates of heaven upon earth.¹

¹“When we look at the condition of our country ; at the poverty and wretchedness of so large a portion of the working classes ; at the intellectual and moral evils which certainly exist among the poor, but by no means amongst the poor only ; and when we witness the many partial attempts to remedy these evils,—attempts benevolent indeed, and wise, so far as they go, but utterly unable to strike at the heart of the mischief ; can any Christian doubt that here is the work for the Church of Christ to do ; that none else can do it ; and that, with the blessing of her Almighty Head, she can.”
—*Dr. Arnold.*

II.

THE PREACHER AS AN ELEVATOR. POVERTY AND THE POOR.

“To preach the gospel to the poor.”

IN considering practically the help which the Christian preacher can render in the work of elevating the poor, it is necessary first to understand the view which Christianity takes of poverty itself.

In Christ, it is with the elements which make poverty, as with nationality and sex. There is neither rich nor poor, neither upper nor under class, for all are one in Him. The rich are His stewards, the poor His witnesses. The functions are different, but the positions are equal; and the spiritual advantages and disadvantages, the duties and responsibilities of the two classes, are evenly balanced.

It is entirely different, however, *out of Christ*. Riches make an immense addition to the responsibilities of an unconverted man. Poverty is an emphatic appeal to the commiseration of God. Dives in his lifetime received “his good things;” Lazarus “evil things.”

Inside of the Christian fellowship, the poor brother is as much a giver as the rich,—“poor, yet making many rich.” The rich are as much indebted to the poor for spiritual, as the poor to the rich for material aid. They are equal helpers of each other.

But *outside*, in that world which the Christian has left, and now looks forth upon, the aspects and relative worth of the two classes are entirely changed. The world of the rich is dark with shadows of coming woe; the world of the poor, bright with dawns of descending opportunity. It is from the first the excuses come; it is of the second, the King says to the messenger, “Go out quickly into the street and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.”

Historians of that Empire which ruled the earth in the time of Christ, when describing the roads which bound its vast conquests together,—and telling how crowded they were with armies going and coming, with couriers fleeing on public errands, with governors of provinces and their retainers riding hither and thither,—are obliged to confess, that the civilization these roads represented was confined to the towns and garrisons through which they passed. On either side lay stretches of

country, and swarms of population, which that civilization never touched.

The description might stand as a picture of the social state of the whole world when Christ began to preach. The rich, the strong, the powerful, appear coming and going along narrow lines, on endless errands, with endless ambitions, caring for nothing, believing in nothing, which did not concern their selfish ends. But on either side, in the swamps, in the untamed woods, on the arid wastes, in the dark lanes of cities, lay the uncared-for poor.

It is to these lanes, these wastes, these social swamps, the first preachers turn their eyes. In that direction lie the new possibilities of the race. The new worlds, the lands flowing with milk and honey, the inheritance they are to go in and conquer,—they are all there. In that world, all despised by men though it then was, lie hidden the beginnings of all that fair and glorious future of which prophets had spoken, and which their Master had come to bring near. This is the new light which Christianity sheds on poverty. All is not lost for the cause of God while the poor remain. The rich of the world go their own way, acting out to the end their self-worship and disloyalty to God ; but down in this world of hardship, of bare-

ness, of hunger—where the sense of want is the greatest element of life—the lost battle may be retrieved.

And it is important to observe, that this hopeful turning towards poverty is neither class prejudice nor after-thought. The Gospel repudiates respect of persons. All classes are invited to the banquet. But when the banquet is set and the guests are assembled, the servants notice that it is the poor whom their lord has chosen.¹ Christianity is conscious of the fact from the first. When the Lord has to mention the signs of the new time, He gives a place beside the cure of lepers and blind people, and the raising of the dead, to the fact, that the poor had the Gospel preached to them.² He Himself comes into the world as a poor man. The ideal of life He recommends is one which poverty favours. He proclaims virtues which the poor can more easily practise than the rich—which the rich can only reach by becoming “poor in spirit.” And although He demands humility and righteousness equally from rich and poor, He yet exclaims, looking at the results of His preaching, “Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of heaven.”

This fact implies far more than that so many

¹ 1 Cor. i. 26, 28.

² Matt. xi. 5.

poor people were comforted, that their individual souls were saved, or even, that a company was gathered from among them to follow Him and His apostles. It was by means of the poor the Lord built up His cause upon the earth. It was by the co-operation they afforded, that He is remembered and worshipped to this day among men. In His kingdom, He opened up for the poor the greatest vocation which human beings can fill, for He admitted them to fellowship with Himself in the great public work of advancing the cause of God upon the earth.

Although their forms have been transfigured by art, the first apostles were just working men. The Lord brought more to the poor who received Him than spiritual life. He endowed them with power, and gave them the highest place which human beings can occupy. This indeed is one of the marks of His divineness, that His words reveal the constant presence, in His thoughts, of the highest ideal for the very poorest He addressed. "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." There was no power put forth by Himself to which He did not invite the poor. They were to do the works which He did, "and greater works than these." And the poor of that day knew the voice

of their true Shepherd, and followed Him. And He led them up to the heights on which His own triumphs were achieved, and showed them the land they were to go in and possess. And it was from their ranks, when He ascended, He chose that band of witnesses who, rich only in grace and faith, went forth and conquered the world in His name.

This is the secret virtue in the help which the Christian preacher renders in attempts to elevate the poor. He brings to the work a vivid recollection of these miracles of grace, and an unwavering belief that they may be repeated in any country, at any hour. He comes in the faith that the Gospel is as truly the power of God for the poor of this time, as for the poor of times gone by. He will not know despair. Behind him is Pentecost ; above him, and beside him, the very Spirit Who, by means of the Gospel, wrought the wonders then. And in the worst of times he maintains that whosoever heareth the word and believeth it, let him have been the poorest of the poor, has already passed upward into the noblest life which a human being can lead, and has begun to shed down the influence which is to make Christendom co-extensive with the race.

The glad tidings which Christ sends to the poor are, therefore, not confined to the words He ad-

dressed to them. His own life, His personal relation with them, the manner of His intercourse, His looks, tones, acts, His interpretations of their conduct, and the place assigned to these interpretations in the evangelical history,—are all expressive of these glad tidings. One day, standing at the temple gate, the Lord saw a poor widow dropping two mites into the treasury. It is glad tidings to the poor to know that this gift of one, whose distinction was her poverty, was a joy and a consolation to the heart of Christ. It was but a little while since He had shed His tears over the doomed Jerusalem,—and now,—and while the cloud was yet resting on His spirit, this poor Jerusalem widow contributed her mites. *All* was not corrupt, then, even in Jerusalem! Here and there little portions remained sound. Before Him was one such portion! The very place the story occurs in, is glad tidings. Our Lord's teaching had risen to those heights after which, only the last height of all remained, the height embodied in the cross; and it is up among these last words—far up among the very peaks of the wondrous story—that His praise of the widow's mites occur. His eye penetrates to the heart of the poor woman's offering. He discovers in it the very noblest trust and sacrifice. "It was all her living," He said. He implies that she could have

given her Isaac if she had been put to the proof. Abraham had done no more. And here was Abraham's faith preserved for the kingdom in the casket of this poor widow's liberality. What God wishes to bring about by money gifts to His treasury, is just what this poor woman already displays. His kingdom is not large giving, but large life ; not riches nor poverty, but faith, hope, and charity. And these this poor one contributes richly. She is herself the best gift to the treasury. She gives all her living. In her noble self-denial she reveals the very kingdom which the proud scribes and Pharisees were casting away. I think I see her, on the evening before the collection, taking out her little store and turning it over in her hand and looking at it—two little specks on the broad surface of her palm. I try also to imagine the luxury of those who on the same day went to their money-changers and drew a sum for the same collection, which, although large, did not appreciably lessen the heap from which they drew. But there is an unexpectedness in the long result which no fancy could anticipate. The great sums given next day, and reported the day after with loud acclaim by the Jerusalem newsvendors, have utterly died out of human memory,—giver and sums together ; but those two mites, so small, so

poor to look at, and to reckon, shine out to this day—across the sea of centuries—an everlasting light! The Lord, by His teaching that day, has left this consolation to the class to which this poor widow belonged. “Your poverty cannot hinder your love; this poor sister loved: nor your faith; this poor widow had faith: nor your worship; this poor saint nobly worshipped by her gift: nor the Divine rewards on righteousness; the memory of this woman’s deed is a light to bless mankind for ever.”

Judging by appearance, it will no doubt always seem, that the help which the poor require is in the things which benevolence offers. Even to Christian men, if only the outside of poverty be considered, it may sometimes seem, that glad tidings from God addressed to the spirits of the poor can be no real meeting of their necessities. The thin clothes which barely keep out the cold, the scant fires which hardly give any heat, the presses which have no store of bread for the hungry children, the rooms which have no beauty for the eye, the atmosphere which is so often poison to those who breathe it, and the unceasing toil which is the chain of the very poor, seem to reach out hands of supplication for more material boons than the Gospel.

The present tendency is to attack the poverty

first. The Christian method has always been to bring Christ into the poverty. The difference is the difference between benevolence and charity. Benevolence will bestow its goods to feed the poor; charity seeks to render them a nobler and more enduring service, by "believing all things, hoping all things, enduring all things," for their salvation. The one method proceeds on the assumption, that it is an evil to be poor; the other, on the conviction, that poverty is for some an inevitable condition of life, and one of the instruments of discipline to the soul. The method of benevolence is to give bread first; the method of charity is to begin by revealing love and truth. The benevolent man, speaking as the French king did, says, "I would have a pair of chickens in every poor man's pot." Christ is not one to despise even such almsgivings and transitory boons. But He concerns Himself first about the wants which are spiritual. He floods the soul of the poor man with the love of His Father. He comes to raise him above his poverty, but it is as a bringer of glad tidings concerning this love He comes. It is true He comes working on other levels as well. He brings healing to the sick, and joy to the bereaved. He lays His hands on all the suffering of the poor. But it remains an instructive fact, that He only twice in the

course of His ministry provided material food for the multitude. And He makes it a reproach to some who followed Him thereafter, that it was for the loaves and fishes. The bread He offers for the satisfaction of their wants is that bread of which if a man eat he shall live for ever. It was Himself He offered. "I am the true bread," He said ; and "the common people heard Him gladly."

The evils which the Lord found in the lives of the poor people He preached to, were as difficult of reach, as deeply rooted, as much entangled with the fibres of existing institutions, and as seriously mixed up with the selfish interests of classes, as any we can have to encounter at present. There was mob-passion, brutality, and prejudice. The people He made His offers to lived in back streets and lanes of towns, under hedges, and on the highways of the country. So far as we can see, their lives were passed in depths as low as those of the poorest in this country. The evils in their condition might well seem, to any who considered their case then, to have required for their eradication the co-operation of legislation and private benevolence, just as the similar evils of our times, are supposed by many to demand now. But the means Christ actually made use of was the preaching of the gospel. Of all conceivable methods

open to Him, this was the one He selected. And when He came to make His arrangements for the continuance and extension of His work after His ascension, it was—not on private beneficence nor public legislation,—but on the preaching of the gospel, He laid the principal stress.

The grand excellence of this method is, that it is an appeal to what is deepest in the man's nature. The teacher who offers the gospel to the poor has taken his stand on the greatness of that nature. It is such a nature as bread alone can never satisfy. "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God." The gospel to the poor is the breath of life from the mouth of God. It is life to the poorest who receive it.

7 The gospel is the recognition of the poor man's humanity. Ah! that is the sting of poverty, that the poor man's humanity is not recognised. Men are so much the slaves of appearance, that they condemn their fellow-men, and misjudge them, and at last hate them, just because they are poor. In the hardness of their hearts they ask, "Why should the poor be poor? It is their undeserving, their unthrift, their incapacity, which has made them poor." Even in the presence of the sufferings of the poor, there are some people

who remain callous. Their sufferings are not realised, not believed in. When the cholera was last here, some of the newspapers said, "It is only the poor people who have suffered as yet." Men without Christ in their hearts, as a general rule, do not believe that poor people have the same pangs and agonies as the rich. But it is the instinct of the gospel to believe it. It does not sympathize with the unfeeling and unjust judgments of men. Under whatever coarse disguises poverty may clothe the body, the gospel recognises a being quick with human feelings and wants. It salutes, in the very humblest it addresses, the same nature which works in the most exalted. It admits the reality, the depth, the sharpness of their sorrows, and the perfect oneness and equality of their humanity. It teaches the labourer, skilled or unskilled, that he is a man. It trains him to know and act as a free man. It inspires him with the all-powerful conviction, that he is, in God's sight, the equal of the richest and most exalted in the land.

The gospel is the proclamation of an immortal destiny to which the very poorest are cordially welcomed. Christ presents Himself, in the message entrusted to His preachers, as the revelation and assurance of this destiny to all who will receive it. He says to the poor man, "Your poverty does

not shut you out from Me." He lets the light of His own life fall on the deep places of a man, and displays thereby the Divine origin and immortality of the soul. He tells the story of His own life upon earth, and the gates of the unseen world open and reveal a pathway into its blessedness which the very poorest among men may tread. "I was poor," He says, "and had not where to lay My head." It is from the heights of the glory He has in heaven, He sends His message down. Beside Him are thrones, and principalities, and crowns, and immortal bliss. That is the inheritance He has prepared for the poor. Hearing such words, beholding such sights, the poor man is poor no more. What are earth's riches, when weighed in the balance with a destiny so divine as that? What are gold and silver, purple and fine linen, loaves and fishes, when put side by side with kinship to Christ, and emergence at last into all His joys?

The principles of the gospel are themselves riches and moral elevation to the soul who receives them. A single truth from any sphere of human knowledge enriches our life: the truths which the gospel announces belong to the very highest region of knowledge, and make us rich by their effects as well as by their possession. The belief of these

truths is new life at the centre of our being. And it is life which leavens out towards the circumference from the moment it takes possession of us. A poor man is not only the heir of a new inheritance from the moment he believes, but in a most real sense he is already the possessor of the inheritance. He can say, "God is mine, Christ is mine, the history and fortunes of Christianity are mine!" The inheritance has descended into his life and made it heavenly already. He walks abroad with the throne of Christ and the worship of heaven in his heart. The very things which made his poverty bitter before, begin to be softened down, and to put forth blooms of good. Under the pressure of the Divine mercy in Christ, he cannot carry his old load of discontent. It has disappeared. The poverty is no longer the terrible evil it seemed, when he had no Christ to fall back upon. His life has been brought into harmony with the Divine purpose for him. The blessedness of the man whose sins are forgiven is his. Thankfulness for that floods every thought and feeling of his soul. And whatever trials and martyrdoms his poverty may continue to impose on him, he can say, as Paul in similar circumstances said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me."

I do not speak from hearsay, or ride on the crest

of a theory. In common with every minister who has ever laboured long in one district, I have witnessed effects of the gospel on the poor,—effects on character, on personal influence, on soul and body, and life and home. I have seen the poor rich in faith, and have myself received, from their lives, of the gold which is tried in the fire. As I write these words, my memory carries me back to times when I lived and laboured among many who were poor; and forms of the sainted dead rise up before me, who on earth were very poor. Come round about me once more, ye blessed spirits, and refresh my heart with your blessedness! I see, first of all, a dear old friend with iron-grey hair and unbeautiful face. I see her again, as she sat day by day in her humble cottage, in an unlovely lane, winding yarn for the brave old weaver who was her husband. Out of the deep hollows of those eyes the old lights gleam once more. What charm was in those gleaming eyes, that the waifs and outcasts of the entire street gathered about her fire? What well of love was in that woman's heart, that those fallen creatures made it their confessional? By what secret did she win back those erring ones, and restore them so often to their homes they had left? And why was she never wearied with well-doing of this

kind? O saint in the depths of poverty! O true sister of mercy! Thou hast lived thy quiet and Christ-like life, and vindicated for all who knew thee the power of the gospel to elevate the poor! I recall next, the form of one whom I shall speak of by his Christian name alone, whom I used to see for years, Sabbath after Sabbath, seated in his pew, poorly clad, but praising God with the fervour of an angel. Just before settling in the district, I had been to see a painting by Noel Paton, of Christ on the Cross; and the face of the Christ took hold of me in the way great faces in pictures do. One of the first things which arrested me in my congregation, when I looked at them from the pulpit, was a living embodiment of that face. The grave, solemn features, the golden-red hair, the large spiritual eyes,—they were all before me again in flesh and blood. It was the face of Archibald. I came to be well acquainted with the man, and soon discovered that not his face only, but his heart, was a copy from Christ's. The lines had fallen to him in stony places. There was some squalor and some misery in his lot, and days and weeks of want; but in the midst of it all he was as one seated at the gates of heaven, listening to the unspeakable sounds. There was a suggestion in all his words of the melodies which the redeemed are

singing. The rudest of his neighbours blessed him ; and the part of the street where his dwelling was came under a real influence from his holy life. Thou pure light shining in a dark place ! Thou beam from the very brightness of God ! The greatest saint who ever abased himself in cell or desert did not surpass thee in power of prayer and contemplation of God. A throng of other forms come back upon my memory—forms of poor people, whose lives were glorified by the gospel. I have known poor men and women, who consecrated their sons to God, and toiled, and pinched, and prayed for them, until they saw them going forth to the waste places of the world to offer the truth of Christ to the perishing there. I have known poor warehouse girls, who were angels of mercy in visiting the sick and watching over the spiritual life of their Sabbath class. I have met with zeal which burned like Paul's, and generosity as noble as that of Barnabas', under fustian jackets. And the most liberal givers I have ever known for missions and home charities, belonged to the working classes. But I must not linger among these memories. Characters as far advanced, as pure and saintly, are moving beside us in every Christian Church in the land. To the end of time the gospel will prove its power of elevating, by

heightening the character of the very poorest who submit to it. It enriches heart and soul and life. And its riches spread from the character into the home. And at last, the very lot of the poor comes to share the blessedness which was fallen on their souls.

Only bring the gospel fairly into contact with a district, let it be the poorest and most debased in the land, and the most kingly and queenly characters shall soon be seen rising up from among its inhabitants and walking about its streets. The poverty may remain with them, but the moral debasement, the lowness, the unthrift and vice, are certain to flee away.

But we shall never understand the full worth of this Divine method of elevation unless we see that the gospel can equip the poorest class it addresses now, as it equipped the poor of Christ's time, for the work of extending Christ's kingdom.

Can gospel preaching so exalt the poor who believe it, that they shall produce preachers of its highest truths? By the sole influence of these truths upon their lives, can they attain to this supreme height in human blessedness, of becoming—not what mere benevolence intends for them, receivers, but—givers, and givers of the light by which the world is to be saved?

Nothing reveals the taint we have received from the world more than this, that our best modern talk about the poor has no reminiscence of this surprising fact. Yet the first and some of the noblest subsequent triumphs of the gospel were among the poor.

Twice in the history of our own country—twice at least—the same proof has been given, that the poor of a land may be so endowed by the gospel, as to render the highest service which men can fulfil for society, or God. It was by preaching to the poor of Scotland, that Knox saved the Reformation in England, and made Scotland what it is. It was by preaching to the poor of England, that Wesley revived the spiritual life of the world. Listen to these sentences descriptive of the first, from Froude. He is accounting for the change which had taken place in Scotland during a ten years' absence of one of Elizabeth's ministers :—

“ It was not for nothing that John Knox had for ten years preached in Edinburgh, and his words been echoed from a thousand pulpits. The murders, the adulteries, the Bothwell scandals, and other monstrous games, which had been played before heaven there, since the return of the queen from France, had been like whirlwinds fanning the fire of the new teaching. Princes and lords only might have noble blood, but every Scot had a soul to be saved, a conscience to be outraged by these enormous doings, and an arm to strike with in revenge for them. Elsewhere the plebeian

element of nations had risen to power through the arts and industries which make men rich : the commons of Scotland were sons of their religion. While the nobles were splitting into factions, clashing their small ambitions, taking securities for themselves, or entangling themselves in political intrigues, the tradesmen, the mechanics, the poor tillers of the soil, had sprung suddenly into consciousness, with spiritual convictions for which they were prepared to live and die. The fear of God in them left no room for the fear of any other thing, and in the fierce intolerance which Knox poured into their veins, they had become a power in the State. The poor clay which, a generation earlier, the haughty baron would have trodden into slime, had been heated red-hot in the furnace of a new faith. . . . Scottish Protestantism was shaped by Knox into a creed for the people—a creed in which the ten commandments were more important than the sciences, and the Bible than all the literature of the world ; narrow, fierce, defiant, but hard as steel, and with strength enough to prevent Elizabeth from ruining both herself and Scotland.”

Stevens has written the story of the Wesleyan movement. It is, from beginning to end, a story of the triumph of truth and righteousness in the world by the instrumentality of the poor. The great people stood apart from the movement. The first converts of the Wesleys were poor people ; their first preachers were miners and masons ; their first societies were gathered out of the slums. The Wesleys recognised Christ beneath the poverty, and took the poorest into the fellowship they were enjoying themselves. “I went to learn Christ among our colliers,”

exclaimed John Wesley, "and drank into their spirit." Under teaching of this temper, the converted colliers became a power in the land. Thousands of them were stirred up to preach the truth by which their own souls had been saved. A network of societies and classes spread throughout the country. Charles Wesley's hymns gave praise and poetry to the movement. Villages, towns, whole counties became vocal with Christian song. Christ was preached in the local dialect, but with Divine power, from house to house. Wayfarers were stopped by eager itinerants, and pressed with the great questions of eternity and the soul. The movement was as life from the dead to England. Its voice reached down to the mines, and out to the neglected mariners at sea. America heard and was glad. And now, after the lapse of a hundred years, it has built churches and planted missions in almost every country in the globe. It has been an unspeakable boon to this country and America. And that peculiarity in its system, which enables it to lay hold of little handfuls of poor people, makes it still the most successful instrumentality in the Christian Church, for the introduction and spread of religion in the colonies.

If it were necessary to give an ampler illustration of the effects of the gospel on the poor, it is

to the working classes I would turn. I cannot help thinking that there has been a very considerable amount of exaggeration and over-colouring—unintentional, no doubt, but careless none the less—in the statements concerning the spiritual state of the working classes, which have become so common on religious platforms of late. If the majority of these classes be still outside of the Churches, that is a fact which it is a Christian duty to call attention to, and a very strong reason why we should bestir ourselves to bring them in. But that is not the entire fact concerning the working classes and the gospel in this country. The entire fact would set before us the proportion of the poor who are Christians now as compared with former times. Are there fewer working men members of Christian Churches now than before? Are there fewer of them, in proportion to the increase of numbers in other classes? Are there fewer in proportion to the numbers of their own class in former days? It must be obvious to any candid observer and reader of the religious history of the land, that the facts lean immensely to the other side. There are many more artisans than any other class in the twenty thousand Nonconformist congregations of England and Wales. And these congregations have come into existence

within the last two hundred years. Surely the other twenty thousand congregations of the Established Church cannot be *all* filled with upper and middle classes. Shall we say nothing of the artisans who fill the churches in Scotland and make the majority of worshippers there? For myself, I have never preached in a church in which there were not artisans; in many of the churches I enter they form the great bulk of the congregations. And I think it downright unthankfulness towards God to omit to state, when speaking of the working classes, that they are, as a whole, a higher type of men to-day than they have ever before been in this land. We can go back on pictures of what they were in past days. Baxter and Flavel have left descriptions of these classes in the times of the Puritans. Wesley and his preachers have described the same classes before their movement begun, in the century which followed. Old men among ourselves remember what they were at the beginning of this century. In the face of these facts, it is impossible to deny that improvement has been at work, and that not a smaller, but a greatly larger proportion of working men are in our Churches than ever before.

I am only afraid that the experimental benevo-

lence of our time may withdraw preachers from the task which has achieved these changes, and can alone complete the work. Like Chalmers, in Glasgow, let us grudge the time we spend on hospital committees and poor law boards. It is a still more questionable spending of time to frequent cricket grounds and harvest homes by way of showing that we belong to the people. We should be so truly one with the people as not to feel the need of showing that we are so by acts of offensive condescension. And we may well leave to noble-hearted members of our churches to fulfil the duty of Christian citizens in benevolent societies and institutions. The best service we can render is to devote all the time and powers we possess to a task which demands them all. It is our wisdom to resist all allurements which would draw us from our pulpit duties. The temptation is great, when success is not immediate or visible, "to look this way and that," and go aside from our appointed paths, and try expedients and inventions, and add to our proper work. But at the end he will be found to have travelled farthest and done the most for the elevation of the people, who has had self-denial and patience enough to say, "This one

thing I am—a bearer of glad tidings. This one thing I do—I preach glad tidings to the poor.”¹

¹ “The force which Christianity applied to human nature, according to St. Paul, and by which it was to produce this change in the moral state of man, was *a new doctrine*. . . . The force of the great example of the Incarnation, which we include in the effect of the doctrine of the Incarnation, has founded the great order of Christian as distinguished from heathen virtues. It is evident what power the great act of forgiveness in the Atonement has had in stamping the great law of forgiveness upon human hearts; what power the Incarnation as a great act of humiliation has had in creating another estimate of human rank and glory; what effect again the same doctrine has had in producing that interest in the poor, and whole difference of relation to them which has characterized Christian society.”—*Dr. Mozley: Bampton Lecture for 1865*, pp. 173–181.

III.

Healer

THE PREACHER AS A HEALER.—RESTORATION OF THE FALLEN.

“He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted.”

A SECOND problem which occupies the minds of the benevolent, at present, is the restoration of the fallen, or, as the modern phrase runs, “the lapsed classes,” in society.

Those classes belong to the great family of the broken-hearted. It is by study of the family as a whole, that we shall best acquaint ourselves with the needs of those who are the special objects of this second problem. And it is by a consideration of the Christian remedies for broken-heartedness in general, that we shall soonest discover the secrets of that wisdom, by which preachers are to be guided in dealing with these furthest-sunk, and most-to-be-pitied, subjects of the malady.

No class has a monopoly of broken hearts. They are to be found wherever sin and shame, disappointment and death, are found. They follow the great wave of human sorrow. Medical men tell us, that after periods of great excitement—

after a war, for example—there is a great increase of the physical diseases of the heart. Out of the dispeace and agitations of a world vexed by sin, come the broken hearts we have to study at present.

The sources of broken-heartedness, although at last they rise out of a single head, are, when they come into contact with social life, as various as life itself. If we were to recount them all, we should require to begin at those heights where human life draws its supplies most immediately from God, and go slowly down to the depths, where the thought of God in the heart is little more than a decaying reminiscence of an early dream. For there are hearts which the sins of others have broken, and there are hearts broken by their own. And besides these, there are hearts broken by the sufferings which the sins of the race have brought into the world.

It is the cry of a broken-hearted soul which rises in the wail of the sorrow-laden sixty-ninth psalm. The waters had come into the soul of the singer, and shame had covered his face. He was an out-cast from his brethren, and the song of the drunkard. But, in his case, it was the weight of the reproach for God he had to bear,—the weight of the bitter persecutions of the wicked, which had

broken his heart. There are people still living and moving beside us of whom that psalm is a fit description. The cause dearest to them, the truth to which their souls have gone out most strongly, the love to which their consciences were most pledged, has been flouted at and scorned; and they themselves have been denounced, for entertaining it, as enemies of the commonwealth or the race. What was the Lord Himself when He uttered that awful cry on the cross? He was one of the broken-hearted.

Besides these, there are hearts which have been broken by simple suffering and loss. A life is severed from its purpose, and the severance has broken the heart. A great love which has grown up, and sent its roots into the being, and become part of the life, has been smitten. And the heart in which it grew is broken. Some dear one has been taken. A mother has lost her child. A widow is encompassed by her desolation. These, and such as these, have entered the family of the broken-hearted.

But it is only for illustration's sake I refer to these. My purpose takes me down among the sad and desolate multitudes, whose broken-heartedness proceeds from sins of their own,—from crime or vice, from the incapacities which spring from

these, or from the temptations of idleness and want.

Here is a poor girl—one of an immense class—who has sunk into a life of shame. She may have been betrayed, or trepanned, or led into the life by vile companions. Whatever dream her young heart once cherished—it is all gone now. Her self-respect, her hope for life, her reputation, her character, are wrecked. She has been abandoned; and now she is an outcast and despised. The casket is broken. The glory has departed from her life. There is shame instead of love. There is private and public loathing instead of the returns of love. Her life is an utter failure. She is one of the broken-hearted.¹

Here is a man who began life with a great am-

¹ "There has arisen in society a figure which is certainly the most mournful, and in some respects the most awful, upon which the eye of the moralist can dwell. That unhappy being whose very name is a shame to speak; who counterfeits with a cold heart the transports of affection; who is scorned and insulted as the vilest of her sex, and doomed, for the most part, to disease and wretchedness and an early death,—appears in every age as the perpetual symbol of the degradation and sinfulness of man. Herself the supreme type of vice . . . she remains, while creeds and civilizations rise and fall, the eternal priestess of humanity, blasted for the sins of the people."—*Abridged from Lecky's "History of European Morals,"* vol. ii. p. 299.

bition, and stood on the very ladder which would have carried him to his crown. And by some awful lapse, by some act or course of wrong-doing, or it may be, by some imprudent overleap, some one unwise speculation, one last wild spasm of despairing effort to retrieve himself,—the vision disappeared, the ladder fell from his feet, and he was thrust down into a region in which the ambition could never more be cherished. And the swift years are dropping their leaves upon his head. And hope has died out of him. Life, as he planned it, has been a complete failure. And, socially,—and in too many cases, morally too,—he is a wreck. He also is a representative of an almost countless class, both among rich and poor, who are broken-hearted.

And here, in this back street, in that dismal room into which no blink of sunshine can ever enter—and huddled among a thousand such—is a family of broken hearts. A few years ago they lived in a rural home, or in a factory village,—poor, but in the sunshine; poor, but surrounded by humanizing influences. They were members of a Christian Church. They had a fair fame among their neighbours. And they had as many elements of well-being as, in their station, they could possess. Some dull time came—some year of commercial

distress. And those poor people, fleeing from idleness and want, came into the town,—came seeking new spheres among the warehouses, offices, work-yards, and factories of this larger world. Alas! they were strangers, and in a strange land. The gates of labour did not open at their first appeal, nor at their second, nor at their third. The precious possessions of the family—the house clock, the Sunday clothes, the chest of drawers—had to be sold to keep them in food. What remained of the furniture, and at last the bedding—all of it gathered with long industry and pride in their former home—was sacrificed to the landlord's claims. Then they gave up housekeeping, and came here. It is a mere inner room, rented from a family very nearly as far down as themselves. And here, without bed, or chair, or table, they try to hold together, thinking sad thoughts, hoping against hope, looking wistfully back to the days which can never return. They are huddled together, without regard to decency or health, in this apartment of an overcrowded dwelling, lowering every day in self-respect, forced by sheer hunger into ways they abhor, strangers to any Church, forgotten by old friends, utterly uncared for, until a visitation of typhus or cholera shall step in, and bring their degradation and misery to light.

The lapsed classes of society are composed of people like these. They are those, whether of the rich or poor, who by paths longer or shorter have descended into worse than poverty. They are the waifs and outcasts of our homes ; they are the waifs and Arabs of our streets. They are the people whom sin, or vice, or crime, or want of employment, or want of food, or homelessness, or all together, have driven down into the abysses of society, into depths where honesty and truthfulness and purity are strange, and all but impossible ; and from whom, so far as a religious life is concerned, the very face of God seems to be withdrawn.

If it were not that the real lives which human beings lead are hidden from those around them, we would discover a countless throng of broken-hearted people in the surging tides of life which hurry past us in the street. But we are strangers to each other, and "spirits clad in veils ;" and this immense circumstance in the life of thousands—this fact of failure and degradation—fails to impress us as it should. Or it impresses us in a wrong way. For by a strange, but common and strong perversity of moral sentiment, this very circumstance, when seen, is made the vindication of cruel reproaches. The broken-hearted, who are

degraded as well as broken-hearted, who have fallen, or seem to have fallen, from old ways of right living, by whatever cause, are, by a sort of pagan or savage instinct in society, indiscriminately looked upon and treated as aliens and worthless,—as burdensome and undeserving. It is in the treatment of these children of sorrow that the pitiless character of the worldly heart comes out: "He has made his bed, let him lie on it." "She is an abandoned woman." "Who did sin, this man, or his parents?" "He is smitten of God, and afflicted."

It lies in the very purpose and character of the gospel to concern itself about this class. It is the divine means of restoration for the race, and it must have light to shed on the great problem of the restoration of the lapsed in a community. And few things, I think, more strikingly vindicate its efficiency, than the way in which it meets the condition and needs of this very class.

They are *despised*. It puts Christ's pity into human thoughts concerning them. They are *outcast*. It opens the door of the Church, and welcomes them into fellowship with the upright and the pure. They are *standing idle*. It restores them to a place in the workfield of God.

This is the healing with which the Lord has

sent us, who are His preachers, to heal the broken-hearted. These are the divine secrets, by which alone the fallen are to be restored. Let us look at them, one by one.

First, It is in the very nature of Christian teaching to diffuse sympathy for the fallen. It is a Saviour for sinners the Christian preacher proclaims.

The view which the deepest Christian thought has ever taken of sin, is itself an exhibition of this sympathy. It rejects the hard and pitiless theory that each of us is born pure and angelic, and that it is by deliberate acts of self-will the fallen reach their position. It finds, even when pointing out the ground of condemnation for rejecting God, an underground for merciful consideration and pity in the fact, that we are all born members of a fallen race, with sinful tendencies and corrupted moral powers, with a fountain of sin in ourselves, and a world of sin around us.

The great German poet declared that there have been, and are, three religions among men. The reverence for what is *above us*, the reverence for what is *around us*, and the reverence for what is *under us*. It is this last which is the Christian religion. And it is its very life and joy to sym-

pathize with the fallen, to consider their sorrows, their temptations, their difficulties, and "to recognize humility and poverty, mockery and despite, disgrace and wretchedness, suffering and death, as divine!" Nay, even to look on sin and crime as, in the long run, and by God's grace, possible steps to what is holy; and, at all events, not absolute and insuperable hindrances. "If Thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared."

Among the silent forces which are at work at this moment in Christian society, softening what is hard, and laying down pathways for the feet of the merciful, I know none more powerful than this which I have just referred to,—this considerate view of human error, this sympathy for the fallen, this humane glance at the deeper sources of failure, degradation, and crime,—this sublime and child-like appeal from a world defiled by sin to the forgiveness which is in God. It is from the gospel these forces are derived.

It is the function of the Christian preacher to draw them forth from the word. He is the interpreter of the Divine pity. The accents which mark his words are those of the heart of Jesus. It belongs to him to go in among the harsh

judgments, the cruel speeches, the hard and unjust thoughts which are going forth upon the fallen, and clear a space for Christ's compassion and mercy. He is the witness and advocate of the sacred truth, that none can fall so low but the grace of God is able to recover him; and that classes, as well as individuals, may be restored to purity and God.¹

Here are some verses, out of a common newspaper, expressive of the sympathy I am describing. I do not suppose it would be possible to find such utterances in the daily literature of any country except one in which the leaven of Christian teaching had been at work. The world's thought, the world's homage, are all on the side of the successful. It is only this mercy of love, this hidden Christ in the midst of us, who goes near to the fallen and the unsuccessful, as these words do :—

¹ "None can fall so low that the Church need despair of him, or is not bound to stoop to him and seek to lift him up again. . . . Nations, like individuals, may be healed; and the Church is the great institution for healing and improvement, which despairs of no moral sickness, passes no sentence of death, pronounces none evil but only a sinner, who may always be converted, while his day of grace, his earthly life, lasts."—*Döllinger's "First Age of the Church,"* p. 229.

“Wreaths to him who from the glorious
Strife of forces comes victorious ;
Pæans and triumphant greeting ;
This the measure of *man's* meeting.

But, O brother, crushed, defeated,
Thus *God's* measure is not meted.

And between earth's pure and sainted,
And her outcast foul and tainted,
All the gulf in mortal seeming
May be bridged in His esteeming.”

That this sympathy must work unseen, that it is more a tone in the sound of life, a breath from its lips, a spiritual force issuing quietly in the contacts of a crowd, does not detract from the reality or worth of it. It is the beginning of all true success in the restoration of the fallen. And, thank God, it is a beginning we have already made in this country. This sympathy exists—has, at least, begun to exist. And it is the gospel which has breathed it into English thought and feeling. It is only the gospel which sustains it, and gives it increase. It exists and works. And at a thousand points, the fallen and the broken-hearted feel the new atmosphere, the air of balm, of love, of heaven, laving and kissing their brows. And even when they are still ignorant of its source, they yield to its influence, and are revived, and begin to

open their eyes again upon life, and to think that the battle is not irretrievable yet.

In the ballad of "Devil Byron," Ebenezer Elliott tells the story of a broken-hearted woman. She had married beneath her, in her brother's esteem, and was cruelly cast out of his heart and society. The poet's moral is well worthy of a place in every preacher's heart :—

" Oh write it then in tears of blood,
Ye purified and thwarted ;
*Oh house of broken-heartedness,
Spare the broken-hearted.*

*Tell not the fallen that he fell,
The foiled that there are winners,
While He whose name is Purity
Died to ransom sinners."*

In the next place, it is the vocation of the Christian preacher to invite the outcasts and the fallen into Christian fellowship.

"This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." There is nothing greater in the life of Christ than this. And the presence or absence of this habit, in those who profess to be His people, marks the presence or absence of His life.

It would be no healing to the broken-hearted to cherish an idle sympathy for them, and still leave them in their farness and isolation. What they

need, next to the sympathy of the good, is fellowship with the good. The old fellowships of nature, of pleasure, or of sin, have been rent. The wounds of the disruptions and severances are the wounds which make them broken-hearted. To draw them into new relationships, to link them again with the family circle of the race, to bring them back into home light,—this is the next most needful passage in their cure.

But this is the very difficulty which seems to worldly hearts so impossible to surmount. How are outcasts, who are outcasts because of sin and crime, or even gross imprudence, to be reunited to the family circle of the unfallen? They have brought discredit and shame into that circle. Can we admit this “woman who was a sinner” into the society of the undefiled?—this sister who has married beneath her, into her former society?—this man who has never succeeded at anything, among men who have?—those thieves and low people into honest company?—those mad enthusiasts and fanatics, among neighbours and friends once more?

Christ commands us to answer these questions in the affirmative, by opening the doors of His Church. He has made it a personal service to Himself to go near to just such people as these, to

the fallen and the criminal and the outcast, with the offer and reality of Christian fellowship. "I was sick, and ye visited ME : I was in prison, and ye came unto ME." To go to sufferers of this class, in *His* name and as *His* representative, and to carry to them the warmth and sincerity of His love, is one of the greatest of the tasks He has assigned to His Church. This is its very function, to be a refuge and a home for the restored. It is fellowship with Christ and with His Father (and that means, with the highest and best society in the universe), for this very end, that its gates may be thrown wide open for outcasts and penitent sinners. Those are the gates which are not to be shut at all by day. And through those gates, when the Church is realizing and acting out the heart of her Master, her members are passing to and fro continually as messengers of mercy, to bring in the wanderers and the prodigals and the the children of broken-heartedness.

In the psalm I have already quoted, in which Christ is prefigured as the greatest of the broken-hearted, it seems the most natural thing that He should flee to the Divine fellowship for refuge. The healing He asks is simply communion with God. "Hide not Thy face from Thy servant. Draw nigh unto my soul." And God's gracious

words elsewhere—"I dwell with him that is of a humble and contrite spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones"—is the standing response to this appeal. The earthly tie is broken; here is a heavenly one. The earthly loves are unfaithful—"they all forsook Him and fled;" but here is the everlasting Lover offering His love and friendship to the soul.

Was not this the very gospel Christ Himself preached to the poor penitent by His side? "To-day thou shalt be with Me in paradise."

In this instance failure seemed to have had a complete victory. The man had once lain an infant on his mother's breast, had once looked up with a child's wonder at the blue and star-filled sky. That early innocence is gone; and perhaps also the softness, which made him too easily the prey of the tempter. By treading of hard ways, and fellowship with the vile, he has been descending to the very deep in which he is found by Christ. Even the prison has opened a deep lower than its own to receive him, and he is cast forth upon the spikes of death and left there to die. It is there the Lord finds him. And even from thence He lifts him up.

Oh sweet and beyond all price to the soul who

has tasted the bitterness of loneliness, or disgrace, or failure, is reunion, through Christ, with the great Christian circle of love and truth and sympathy once more! It is the Church's mission to the fallen, to bestow this sweetness. And imperfectly though she may be fulfilling this part of her vocation, there is no institution in the world which is even attempting to do it but herself. And faintly though her heart may throb with the feeling, it is only here, in all the earth, where the joy of the angels over outcasts brought back to the fold is felt.

If it were possible to place on one side, the highest moral life among men which is still "without Christ," and, on the other, the humblest embodiment of real Christian life, and ask them to announce their several plans for the purification of society: the voices from the one side would say, "Let us seek for ourselves the highest, the most beautiful, and dwell in the society of the best. Let us follow the heroes. From the impure, the vile, and the criminal let us for ever flee. So only, so most surely, shall we promote purity in the land." But from the voices on the other side would come words like these: "By the grace of God we have found the highest for ourselves. We have been admitted into the society of the best.

Our fellowship is with the Father and with the Son. Are we here to live—even a pure life—to ourselves? Are we here to be ministered unto, or to minister? The Master has given us a place at His banquet; let us not feast alone, but go out among the homes of the fallen and the broken-hearted, and compel our brothers and sisters there to come in with us to the feast, and share our joy.”

Thou blessed Christ! From Thee has come to Thy people the wisdom to feel and speak in this way! From Thee, this great vocation to bring the wanderers in! Oh that we, who are Thy ambassadors, might thoroughly realize the greatness, the blessedness, the imperative necessity of the work; and go near, with Thy love and tenderness, to those exiles and outcasts; and drop into their parched hearts the story of Thy compassion; and ply them with the urgency which was in Thy heart, when Thou tookest our wounds upon Thyself, and openedest a fountain of healing for us all in Thy blood!

Finally, the Christian preacher announces the return of the fallen to service. He proclaims a Saviour, who has undertaken “to prepare a place” for them in the workfield of His kingdom.

The last grand necessity of human souls is, in some way, to be enabled to fulfil the end of their

existence. Can those who have been broken in the very centre of their strength ever do this, or be of use any more? Can those among them especially, who have involved themselves in broken-heartedness and sin, ever emerge as partners in works of righteousness again?

The best reply to these questions, and the finest illustration of the Divine reserves for failure-sorrow, is the case of the Lord Himself. It might well seem to one looking on in Pilate's judgment-hall, that His human life was mere failure and defeat. The reproaches of them that reproached His Father had fallen upon Him. His ears had caught the wild cries, "Crucify! crucify!" He was smitten in the house of His friends. And be sure, He carried under that calm exterior the wounds of a smitten heart. He had come to bless the race. There was in Him a yearning, such as no other in the form of man had ever felt, to do good to men. And now He was no more to teach,—no more to go about the land assuaging sorrow and liberating the diseased. His active life was over. None knew so well as Himself that the end was near. Was His time of service also at an end? Was there nothing further He could do for the race He loved so well? Everything had been taken from Him which man could take,—His liberty,

His disciples, His opportunities to do good. Nothing was left but His wounded heart. But this *was* left. And with this He rendered the greatest service of His life. He offered it on the cross for the sins of the world. He thereby vindicated for evermore a place and a use for broken hearts ; and Himself ascended into the very firmament of influence, where He shines for ever, as the Sun which has risen with healing in His wings.

Now this is the very principle He observed in dealing with the broken-hearted among His followers, who were furthest removed from His life. The "woman that was a sinner" had also nothing left to her but her broken heart. But that was accepted by the Lord. Having lost everything else, she laid that heart on the altar. And that which seemed her defeat has been her victory and her crown, as an influence for good in the world. By that very offering she is serving Christ until this day. It is the odour of this inner ointment in her casket—her broken-heartedness—which has been filling the house of the Lord ever since.

And this is the healing which Christ has sent us to apply to the poor fallen creatures beside us, who are broken-hearted by sins and misdoings. We are to assure them of new chances of serving God. Speaking at the gates of the Christian workfield,

we are to say to the penitents of the street and the lanes : " Come, weary and heavy laden ; come, broken-hearted ; come, all pierced by the effects of sin ; come and take Christ's yoke upon your souls." And when they reply, " We have let everything go,—youth and strength, and means and influence, and reputation and character : we have nothing but our blights, our disappointments, our shame, our broken hearts,"—we are still to say, speaking for Christ, " Come none the less ; come all the more ; come just as you are, with your disappointments, and your losses, and your broken hearts. Lay these hearts on the altar. *A broken and a contrite heart God will not despise.*"

And this is the beauty of this healing of love. That which the world has cast out and rejected, that which it wags its head at and spits upon, Christ draws in and sanctifies, and gives it a place and a use as an oblation to God. Not only are the broken-hearted admitted to a place among those who are fulfilling the highest ends in the Divine purpose for society,—not only are they drawn out of the shadow in which they were hidden, and yoked anew into Divine service,—but it is their very hearts which are made the instruments of the service they are to offer. The strong man gives his strength ; the rich man his riches ; the learned his

learning. This poor recovered life gives its wounds, its broken heart.

And by no mere figure of speech. There is a real drawing in of this class into the high services of the kingdom. They are, if nothing more, monuments of the Divine compassion; and so they serve. They carry their deep heart-thankfulness for restoration into the public song; and so they serve. The very quality in them, which the tempter laid hold of to lead them astray, becomes, when sanctified, a noble sympathy and Christian love; and as possessors of that, and enrichers of the general life by their contributions of that, they serve. And in a thousand other ways. In all the ways in which pity, compassion, and tenderness are required, they serve. Over all their wounds and recovered capacities the Divine finger has inscribed, *Holiness to the Lord*. The poor torn life, smitten at the very centre, is no longer torn, but reclaimed and made holy. The heart is healed, and its healing is its consecration to the Divine service. It is a healed heart,—a *hale* heart, because it is a *holy* heart. Reaching, by the Divine mercy, a place on the altar of sacrifice, it has re-ascended to the heights where the very air is health.

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In the practical application of these principles, the preacher has to remember that this work has never yet been undertaken, except in the face of scorn and loathing. The self-righteous inhumanity which, standing aside itself from lending the slightest help, insinuated the vilest things of the help offered by Jesus, lives and burns in human hearts to this day. Preaching to the lost, and telling them of the Divine pity, is still, in the esteem of many, labour expended on vile and worthless objects.

I have known Christians, preachers and teachers, whom God specially called to go to the lost with the message of mercy. And it has been my hard fortune to know also another sort, who could not find words strong enough to express their disgust at such attempts to follow the example of Christ.

The Christian preacher must not only hold himself prepared to meet with inhumanity of this stamp, but, going further, to affront it by the most unequivocal expressions of his sympathy with the work condemned. So many are the unsympathising, the loathful of work that takes the worker into contact with the fallen, and so frequently are these the people who make a profession of religion, that it will be a great part of his own personal conflict "to keep himself unspotted" from that worst and most Cain-like outbreak of the worldly heart.

The preacher has next to remember that he can only be widely useful in this work by evoking the interest and activity of his people. The messengers to those outside, in most cases, must be the members of the Church. The task of the teacher, in relation to this work, is to set and keep before his people its necessity, its extent, its variety, and the obligations to undertake it. Preacher and people stand together beside a world full of lost souls, of lives fallen from some happier state, and of whole families and districts living in utter forgetfulness of God. It is the preacher's mission to bring the conscience of his hearers and these wastes of fallen life face to face in the light of the Cross and the Judgment-day.

He has to consider the variety of methods required for a right doing of this work, and the corresponding variety of gifts among the people. It is always a great success when the special gift can be yoked to the special task. But I must not omit to say here, that it is not always the preacher who is best fitted to accomplish this. His duty is didactic more than administrative. And the only service he can render, in many cases, is, out of the word entrusted to him, to bring encouragements to this work, and exhibit the principles according to which it should be carried on.

It may be the lot of the preacher to be located in a district occupied by the lapsed classes. Where this is not the case, he will go down as often as he can into the mission field of his Church, at the head of his reclaiming band, and proclaim the glad tidings with his own lips. One way or other, he will gather the lost around him, and invite them back to the Heart from whose embraces and love they have strayed.

He will inculcate on his fellow-workers and himself, the necessity of gentleness in the method of their work. Whoever would visit such a district as I am referring to, for whatever purpose of love, but very especially to preach the gospel in, must do so with humaneness, delicacy, and love. There are no susceptibilities more easily wounded than those of the classes who know themselves to be fallen.

A preacher who will make his evangelistic visits with a condescending air ; who, in the homes where he may have gathered the little congregation to preach to, shows signs of disgust at the things about, or signs of terror if there should be disease near by, will go far to spoil his work, however good in other respects it may be.

The visit must be like Christ's work in this—that it shall not be made to look like condescension, but mercy and love. And, rightly performed,

although it only touches the surface and is temporary, it is like bringing a bit of Christ's life into the dismal home. Palm-bearing Judæa ; the sea of Galilee, with its storms and miracles ; the mount of Transfiguration, with its glimpses of glory ; and Christ on the Cross, shedding His blood for sinners,—all follow the steps of one who visits wisely, humanely, Christianly, with a New Testament in hand. In this work the Christian preacher will not despise even tract distribution, although he may justly think it the cheapest sort of work, and the least remunerative, which it is possible to render in reclaiming the lost. But with tracts, or without them, there must be more than knocking at the door—there must be actual human intercourse, brotherly fellowship to some extent, and the bringing of glad tidings—not rebukes, far less denunciation,—but glad tidings from Christ to the hearts of the fallen.¹

George Eliot, in the story of "Amos Barton,"

¹ "Jesus Christ must still walk through the streets and lanes of our great cities, and go forth to the highways and hedges, if the lost are to be saved, the Church to be healthy, and the world to be assured that He is the wisdom and the power of God. The Divine love for souls must be carried through the warm heart and hands of human love, that by these two strong things—the love of God calming the conscience and purifying the heart, and the love of man softening the dis-

has turned the visits of the curate to the work-house inmates into ridicule. The visitor is represented expounding the mysteries of the catechism to poor dazed creatures, whose minds have years ago gone wool-gathering—poor, idiotic, used-up, mindless old men and women. But that is a style of scoffing which even a great genius like George Eliot should not be allowed to indulge in without rebuke. Admit that the Amos Bartons of Christian benevolence cannot dry up the sources of social misery ; admit that any amount of the work they do can never take the high place of remedial measures ; admit even that there is a certain waste of energy in the methods they pursue,—is it nothing that they take in blinks of sunlight into dark regions, and that they, if only for a moment, give the poor lost captives a glimpse of other life than their own ? Is it nothing to break in upon the monotony of a dreary life, to carry even the cheap luxury of a new voice, a kind word, a show of human interest, into a world where almost everything is bare and flat, and where kind words and human sympathy would otherwise never enter ?

tance between classes and tribes and nations—the world may be first conciliated and then conquered.”—*Rev. Wm. Graham, Liverpool.*

Our own lives would often be very blank but for these glimpses of higher things; these moments when we are taken up as in the arms of an angel to see the land that is very far off. No more than the inhabitants of a sunken district, or the inmates of a workhouse, do we live in perpetual sunshine. Our days for the most part are dark and dreary. But God sends us glimpses of better days, times when the clouds are dried up after the rain, and the blue sky shines down upon us. And it is by the exquisite enjoyment of these moments, diffused by memory over our thoughts, that the rest of life is sweetened.

Why should the Christian preacher think shame to follow this Divine method? If God sweetens his own life by blinks and glimpses of higher life, may he not go boldly forward in the work of setting his people, by visits to mission districts and workhouses, to open windows in heaven, and give the poor fallen creatures who live there glimpses of the blue?

It is easy for fictitious writers to cast scorn on the efforts of Christian men to bring tidings of the Saviour into a sunken district of our great cities. It is very easy, as some of them do, to exhibit fictitious heroes, working fictitious miracles among the fictitious poor. It is the higher task of the

Christian preacher to awaken in his flock an interest in the salvation of the actual poor, and to lead them to express that interest by real activities, although in many cases it can only be by the doing of little kindnesses, and the paying of visits, which shall be no more to those who receive them than the grasp of a loving hand in the dark.¹

Visiting the lost to preach the gospel to them, implies the purpose of rescuing; and rescuing is the second step in the work of reclaiming. The blessedness of taking the first step is, that it almost always leads to taking the second.

In itself considered, rescuing is a wide work, and one that branches out in innumerable directions.

¹ I am sorry to have to refer to George MacDonald, in connection with these assaults on Christian work among the lapsed. But the last volume of "Robert Falconer" is a very unrighteous piece of scorning at a body of men who have done, and are doing, a great work among this class in the debased districts of London. Does George MacDonald really believe that city missionaries resemble the monstrous caricature, the controversial disputer, he depicts in that volume? Even if there were defects of capacity in these missionaries, are agents like Robert Falconer so plenty that the work could be committed to them? This fine writer might reserve some of the sympathy he shows towards abnormal creatures like Falconer's father, for the humble Christian men, who, up to the light that is in them, are honestly striving in our mission districts, by gospel preaching, to save the lost.

But the principles which the preacher has to work with are the same, whatever the objects sought to be secured may be. I select for illustration perhaps the most difficult enterprise in this direction to which the Christian preacher can turn,—the rescue of young women fallen into a life of shame, and from that, lowering still, into a life of crime. And as for my purpose, an actual appeal may be as good as an exposition of what such appeals should be, I venture to introduce some paragraphs of a discourse, in which this duty was attempted. It was addressed to a congregation of ladies, and was an appeal for personal help, in an endeavour then being made to rescue the farthest fallen of the class I have named.

I invite you ladies of the better classes, who by the happy circumstances of your lives have long forenoons, which you actually don't know how to use, which you give, rather than be idle, to profitless needlework, to a more remunerative labour. Come to the help of the Lord in this work of rescuing the farthest fallen of your sex. Here is a work in which the forenoons you spend shall be well spent, and the sacrifices you make shall go with God's blessing upon them, to heal the broken-hearted, and bring the wanderers home. Here are services in which you may be the means of opening the gate into paths of purity and well-doing for poor, fallen, untaught, misguided girls, who are your sisters in the flesh, and through Christ, have a claim upon the best and fairest among you for sisterly help and love.

Yet I am almost afraid to name the sphere for which your

services are required. We have established 'Homes' for the fallen ; but it is high time now that we were reaching beyond these Homes, and getting at the female inmates of our prisons. I know how much is asked when any lady is invited to look at that work. It is not pleasant work. There is a repulsive shadow upon it. And, more than almost any other, it requires special gifts in those who would undertake it. The prison itself is a difficulty. It is the saddest, darkest, dreariest chamber in the house to which folly leads its victims. A fallen woman who has come to the length of a cell in the prison, may well say : "Farewell sun and farewell moon." The glory is departed from her life. And henceforth her career, if she regain her liberty, is the career of an outcast and suspected felon. The ladies who shall undertake this work will have to deal with women to whom life is an utter failure, who have resigned themselves to utter ruin, who have no hope, who are past caring for hope.

It is an aggravation of the difficulty that, in many of the cases, you cannot bring your Christian influence to bear on women merely fallen. It is not the case that they were once innocent and are now guilty. Over a large area of that female life, the distinction between innocence and guilt is hardly known. From their very infancy they have been sodden in sin. Not only are they defiled and degraded by the life they have led, they are overrun with vicious habits of thought and speech. Not only are they linked and bound in the tangle of criminal and brutal associates, they are all this without a background of better days to appeal to. They are fallen and do not know that they are fallen. They have never known another kind of life. And the very language by which you shall try to reach their hearts will sound a foreign speech in many of their ears.

But if the difficulties be great, the encouragements are not few. Ladies have already laboured in this field, and have prospered in their labours. It is part of the glory of our national Christianity, that it includes in its history the life of Sarah Martin. This humble lady did just this work, to which

I now invite you, and did it at a time when public opinion out of doors went in the teeth of her doing it. She had enormous difficulties to encounter, but she encountered them and overcame them, and saved many a soul. There is nothing in all the romances more touching than the letters which Miss Martin received from the women she reclaimed. And you will find, what she also found, that *all* the field is not "wayside" and trodden soil.

While many of the inmates of prisons are brutalised and ignorant, others of them, a certain proportion of them, have knowledge and feeling enough to be easily reached and impressed. You will find there women who look back to the days of the Sabbath-school as the happy days of their life. You have *that* to work upon. The old lessons have not quite died out. The hymns these poor creatures learned, and the tunes they sang, are not quite forgotten. I was very much moved once when passing through the lobby of one of the Homes, by hearing the familiar hymn, "Earth is a desert drear, Heaven is our home," rising in a swell of melody through all the house. I could not help thinking, as they sang, that their thoughts might be away back among the happier days, when they sat on the forms of their district Sabbath-schools and sang such songs with innocent hearts. You will not only meet with girls of this class, but now and again, with those who have reached the prison by some single bound, some great and awful crime, but yet perhaps only one, and who only need the contact of Christian truth and kindness and mercy to reclaim them to the paths of virtue. Oh, you sisters of mercy, what a power is yours in a case like that! One look of a sister's eye! one touch of a sister's hand! one loving expression of real sympathy! the earnest assurance that there is forgiveness with God, and a promise from you to befriend the outcast when she regains her liberty—and she may turn her back for ever upon the darkened past, and begin anew the ascent on whose summit stands the throng who have washed their robes and made them white in the

blood of the Lamb. But I do not found my appeal on the certainty of success. I say, even if there should be no appearance of success—even in the face of unsucccess, we are bound to attempt this work. The blessing is upon the *visiting* of the prisoners, not upon the success. And there may be success which we may not see to be success. You do not know, you never can know, what good may arise out of visits lovingly and regularly made. Who of us has not read of the prisoners in the Bastille, who relieved the terrible monotony of their lives by observing the habits of flies and spiders ; and who actually sought to satisfy their yearning for society by forming friendship with birds and mice ? And shall there be this yearning for fellowship in even the worst cells of our prison, and no attempt made to satisfy it in a Christian way ! It would be a scandal to our common Christianity if there was any one pool of evil, however black and deep, in which actual sisters are engulfed, into which we were not willing to reach the long arm of Christian help. In the interest of the general work we have to do for society, we cannot afford to leave this special work of prison visiting unperformed. If it be not gone into, a great sum of our other labours will just be the old toil of rolling up the stone to the hill-top, to see it roll down again to the base. When the female convicts leave the prison, the harpies of Satan are waiting to waylay them and get them back into their old ways. It is of the very greatest importance to sow their hearts with Christian truths while they are under restraint, and besides that, to establish, by means of lady-visitors, a kind of underground railway, by which they may be passed on in safety, to circumstances in which the truly penitent will have a chance of beginning anew a pure and honest life.

Workers in this department are greatly needed. It is a work which should not be all left to prison chaplains. Surely Christ will touch some hearts, and they will kindle into sympathy and zeal. All work is noble, undertaken in His name. Christianity translated into action means—wise and beautiful ladies girding themselves for humble toil, and stepping forth

into the miry ways to wash the soiled feet of society. You cannot travel so far, you cannot stoop so low, but the loving Jesus has been farther, and lower, and before you in the work. And in His cause, and with a genuine love of souls in your heart, you cannot stoop at all, without deriving from every act a wisdom and a beauty not your own, and an experience that you never resemble the Master so much, as when you are reaching down loving arms and hands to rescue the fallen from continuance in a life of dishonesty and shame.¹

¹ "Those who meet within the church walls on Sunday should not meet as strangers who find themselves together in the same lecture hall; but as co-operators in a public work, the object of which all understand, and to his own department of which each man habitually applies his mind and his contriving powers. Thus meeting, with the *esprit de corps* strong among them, and with a clear perception of the purpose of their union and their meeting, they would not desire that the exhortation of the preacher should be, what in the nature of things, it seldom can be, eloquent. . . . It might then become weighty with business and impressive as an officer's address to his troops before a battle. For it would be addressed by a soldier to soldiers in the presence of an enemy whose character they understood, and in the war with whom they had given and received telling blows." —"*Ecce Homo.*"

IV.

THE PREACHER AS A RECONCILER.— EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYED.

“To preach deliverance to the captive.”

THE problem which is opened up to us in these words is one of the greatest which can be submitted to an industrial people. It is the problem of the relation between the employer and the employed. And the question which that problem raises is: How shall that relation be purified from every vestige of injustice and cruelty?

My object will be to show that the Christian preacher has been entrusted with the elements of the true solution. But before entering on this demonstration, I shall make two or three observations with the view of exciting a deeper interest in my subject.

A right solution of this problem would sweeten the lives of the largest class in our commonwealth. An American visiting England once made the remark: “As soon as you enter England, which, with Wales, is no larger than the State of Georgia, this little land stretches by an illusion to the dimensions of an empire.” The

remark is still more applicable to the fields of labour in this country. You have only to visit them, to think of their variety and extent, and the domain of the employed stretches on every side to the dimensions of a world. The agricultural districts, the mining districts, the factory districts,—what breadths of labour do these alone include! There are workers in iron, in brass, in gold, in wood, in stone. We have our weavers, paper makers, and printers. We have carriers, mariners, and fishermen; the employés of railway companies, telegraph companies, warehousemen, and shopkeepers; the makers of our furniture, the builders of our houses, our bridges, our ships; and that great multitude, our domestic servants. The daily lives, the domestic interests, the physical health, the moral well-being of those immense and various masses of our fellow-beings and neighbours, our co-workers in the commonwealth, depend, to a great extent, on a right solution of this problem.

Those who are under obligations to seek the right solution of this problem, are a very much larger class than the mere employers of labour. The mill owner, the master builder, the firm of engineers or of shipbuilders, the farmer, the manufacturer, are mere middle men between

the purchaser and the artisan. In this country, the people are themselves the employers. If a wrong is inflicted on any class of workers, therefore, it will not do for other classes, outside of the immediate employers, to stand aside and say, "That is the concern of those who employ those workers." It is their concern as well. An injustice perpetrated in a factory or a workshop, may be, and often is, the mere expression of some wrong habit, some meanness, some unreasonableness in general society. It is the West-end ladies of London, for example, not the mistress milliners and dressmakers, who are the real oppressors of the poor dressmakers, who have to work day and night on the occasion of court levees and balls. It is the patronage bestowed, by the common people, on cheap shops which is the real source of that sea of iniquity—slop work.

In the very nature of things, this is a problem whose solution depends much more on the diffusion of right views regarding the labourer and human life, than on political changes or legislation. A word fitly spoken in this cause is a seed which goes on bringing forth fruit at every point where employers and employed come into contact. Lady Nairne raised the standard of price and wages for

all perilous employments when she put the words into the lips of fishermen's wives :—

“ It is not fish ye buy,
It is fishermen's lives.”

Hood put an affront on all slop work for ever when he flashed out the same truth in his immortal song :—

“ O men with sisters dear !
O men with mothers and wives !
It is not linen you're wearing out,
But human creatures' lives.”

A word, therefore, with range enough to cover the domain of labour, with light in it to reveal whatever is unjust in that domain, and to indicate true ways of intercourse, service, and fair dealing, is, more than anything else, what is required for the perfect solution of this problem. Such a word we have in the gospel of Christ. It reveals the worth of the labourer ; it puts a crown on the man who is just to his labourers ; and it opens up to the labourer himself the way to perfect liberty.

Keeping these remarks in view, I hope to make plain the following things :—That it is the Divine purpose to liberate the children of toil from oppressive usage : That Christian truth has put forth undoubted evidence of its power to effect this purpose : And, That there is nothing in the existing

relations between employers and employed which may not be sweetened and filled with justice by mutual submission to this truth.

I. THE DIVINE PURPOSE.

The deliverance which Christ has sent us to preach is liberation from every evil to which human life is subject. In His language, a "free man" means the highest development of man. But it will be convenient to postpone the consideration of this wider fact until we have seen that it lies in the scope and power of the revealed word to abolish the most literal form of bondage to which toiling masses can be subject,—that which deprives them of personal liberty.

We shall begin with the Old Testament. The history of God's dealings with His chosen people, as recorded there, is one long prophecy of deliverance for the enslaved. Let us throw ourselves back for a little among the old stories.

No feeling of the Divine heart is more illustriously displayed in them than sympathy for slaves. What is the story of the deliverance from Egypt? Just an outcome of this sympathy. A radiance of Divine interest, of the most paternal pity, rests on that whole transaction. Aside from the great throb of Egyptian life, chained to public

works, under the merciless rigour of taskmasters, with nothing left of human privilege but the privilege of sending up a cry to God, to appearance forgotten of God, those Hebrew slaves were spending their bitter days in the brickkilns of Egypt. And then, when their days were at the darkest, and there was no help in man,—then, when the one man who could have helped them was a fugitive and outlaw,—then, step by step, like the march of angels, came the events which issued in the liberation of the captives and the confusion of their lords. Why was the memory of this deliverance perpetuated among the Hebrew people? Why was the story chanted through subsequent ages in the most sacred songs of the nation? Why have the old songs been preserved to be psalms for us? That the hearts of all who praise God might praise Him as the Deliverer of slaves. Miriam sang for other ages than her own when she said, “In Thy mercy, Thou hast led forth the people whom Thou hast redeemed.” And Christian worshippers chanting the story of this deliverance, singing in their public assemblies “the song of Moses and the Lamb,” are telling out the secrets of a heart, which in all dispensations is the same, which has ever regarded the cry of the oppressed, and is full of pity for the enslaved.

Notwithstanding all that people interested in the defence of slavery have alleged to the contrary, it is impossible, I think, to read much in the Old Testament without being impressed by the greatness and sincerity of this sympathy. What was the Sabbath day? A day of rest for slaves. What was the Seventh year? A year of liberation for many of them. What was the Jubilee? The time of liberation for all. And when surrounding nations were still putting their prisoners of war to death, God was teaching this nation the more merciful method of yoking them to service; and giving laws for their protection from cruel usage.

All through the history of the ancient people this sympathy of the Divine heart for the enslaved shines out. Look at their earlier trials when they fell under the power of the surrounding nations. Look at their captivities in later times. Mainly, they are occasions for the exhibition of this Divine pity for slaves. It is not the mere pathos of circumstances that penetrates the heart when we read of the captives by Babel's stream hanging their harps on the willow trees:—

“For there a song required they,
Who did us captive bring :
Our spoilers called for mirth, and said,
A song of Zion sing.

Oh how the Lord's song shall we sing
Within a foreign land ?
If thee, Jerusalem, I forget,
Skill part from my right hand."

Through this wail of the captives' hearts pierces the compassion of God for those whose wail it was. And the story of that compassion in the past is a perpetual assurance to man that captives shall not anywhere appeal to it in vain. How much our own interest in, and sympathy with, slaves has had its source in those stories about captives and captivities in the Old Testament !

A faithful unfolding, therefore, by preachers, of the things of God, even in the Old Testament, must exhibit a heart opposed to slavery. But when the preacher come to the story of the cross, and to the exhibition of the heart displayed on that cross, he comes to a fire in whose heat the chains of the slave must dissolve.

The early history of Christianity brings two things face to face. An institution, world-wide, deeply rooted, cruelly protected—the institution of slavery ; and a doctrine—the doctrine of the cross. It does not more certainly lie in the morning to chase the shadows of night away, than it lies in the scope and power of this doctrine to abolish slavery.

There would be no slavery if men knew and believed the true doctrine concerning God and man. It is because God has been misrepresented, unknown, or disbelieved, that gyves have been fastened on human wrists. It is because men have not understood their real relation to God that they have submitted to this wrong. Mazzini, in one of his Lectures on the Duties of Man, illustrating the point that the world is governed by religion, says : "When the Indians really believed that some of them were born from the head, others from the arms, and others from the feet, of Bramah, they organized their society in *castes*, and assigned to one class intellectual, to another military, to a third, servile tasks." What Christ does for our race is to proclaim the true doctrine concerning God. He reveals to us the universal Father. He makes caste and servitude impossible by ranging all men as subjects and children of the one, all-loving, impartial, Maker and King of men. And He exhibits every man as made in the entire image of God. He comes to every man with an equal offer of the love of God. It is for man as man, without distinctions of rank, or race, or colour, He died. His great apostle Paul, interpreting the doctrine of the cross, carries it into applications which seal the doom of slavery. He represents Christ as, under

the Father, Lord of every man. He declared that in Christ there was "neither bond nor free, but all are one."

The doctrine of the cross is thus, on its human side, the true doctrine of man. Not only is it the revelation of a Divine Heart which is a fountain of pity, justice, and love for all human relationships, but it is a direct announcement of the greatness and worth of man as man. One of the prophets made it a reproach against the men of his generation, that they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes. The price at which God values the poorest is the blood of His Son. He bought them with that blood. At the foot of the cross, the slave rises into the stature of a king, and receives the consecration of a priest. "Thou hast redeemed us by Thy blood, and made us kings and priests unto God." Even at the present day we hardly realize the greatness of this doctrine. Yet it is by what has been realized of it that all the ameliorations which have taken place in the circumstances of slaves, and all the victories over the institutions of slavery, have been accomplished.

II. FULFILMENT OF THE PURPOSE.

It is difficult to place before our minds a full idea of the extent to which slavery existed when

Christian doctrine began to be preached. Not one nation only,—every nation, every city, village, and home of that world which Christian preachers were sent out to subdue, were familiar with slavery. In the dominant empire of the age, every great household was served by slaves. Slaves worked the farms of the great landowners. Slaves built the theatres, the aqueducts, the temples, the monuments. They were so numerous, they formed a separate nation in the heart of the empire,—hated, feared, oppressed, cruelly, brutally treated. That there was none of that pity for the slave in Roman which we read in Jewish law, let the following instances show.

“While L. Domitius was acting as prætor in Sicily, a slave killed a wild boar of an extraordinary size. The governor having heard of this man’s skilful courage, wished to see him. The unfortunate slave, gratified by such a mark of distinction, obeyed the summons, and hoped to receive commendation and rewards. But Domitius, informed that he killed the animal with a common boarspear, ordered him immediately to be crucified, on the barbarous plea that the law forbade slaves to use these, or any other weapon.” Guizot makes the pertinent remark, that the cruelty of Domitius is perhaps less surprising than the indifference with

which it is related by the Roman orator, who was so little affected by it, that he said, "This may be thought hard, but I express no opinion on either side!"¹

In the year that Paul arrived in Rome, the prefect of the city was killed by one of his slaves. The savage punishment, inflicted by law, was the execution of all the slaves on the estate, more than four hundred in number, and including women and children, although they were entirely innocent and even ignorant of the crime.²

When Octavius became master of the republic by the defeat of M. Antony and his companions, he crucified every slave found in their armies, whose masters could not be found; and others he delivered to the masters who could be found, to be punished because they had dared to fight by the side of free men.³ What were a few thousand slaves more or less to the pitiless heart of Rome?

Christ sent His preachers "to preach deliverance" to this huge nation of slaves. Hardly any word He sent them to utter required more faith than this, especially when it had to be spoken

¹ Guizot's Notes to Gibbon, vol. i.

² Conybeare and Howson, vol. ii. 468.

³ Merivale, vol. iii. 20.

among Romans. The Jew was accustomed to think of liberation ; the Roman held his slave a slave till death. Yet over all the darkness of their seemingly hopeless lot, and into the cruel depths of the public sentiment which embittered that lot, the voice of Christ speaking through the Gospel said, "Let there be liberty." And the liberty began to arise.

Often though I have studied it, I do not cease to be surprised by the method by which the early Church dealt with this problem. It established no abolition society. It encouraged no under-ground railway. It did not even suffer a run-away slave to retain his liberty. It simply proclaimed the new relation between Christ and men. During Paul's first visit to Rome, his words took hold of a slave who had fled from Colossæ. From the slums, in which men of his class concealed themselves, he was raised by the gospel, and by personal contact with Paul. And the most tender relations sprang up between them. Paul had a great hunger for human love ; and this was a man to satisfy it. He was, as many a slave of that time was, an accomplished, helpful, brotherly man. Under the influence of the new life, he would have become a second Timothy, or Luke,—a very boon of comfort, to Paul. But it lay beyond the ethics of the gospel

that Paul should retain that boon. And the new light he had received would bring Onesimus himself into the immediate presence of the claims of his master at Colossæ. The old bond existed. The gospel had not dissolved it. On the contrary, the new sensitiveness, which the gospel had wrought in his conscience, only made him feel the claims of his master the more. He dared not continue his absence. An imperative obligation lay on him, to prove his Christhood by surrendering the liberty he had snatched. And he returned to his former bonds. But he returned with this immense difference in himself, that he had been manumitted in the inner life. He returned to Colossæ one of the Lord's free men. It so happened in his case, that his master was a Christian; and also one of Paul's converts. "Thou owest unto me even thine ownself." In a letter, which is unsurpassed in all literature for delicacy, courtesy, and courage, the apostle—"Paul the aged" by this time—commends the returned slave to his master's forgiveness and love. If he had wronged him in money, he was to put that to Paul's account. "Receive him now no longer as a slave, but a brother beloved,—both in the flesh and in the Lord." The new relationship to Christ drew the old into its folds, and, without destroying it, gave it another

aspect. Outwardly, Onesimus would still be a slave to Philemon. Inwardly, his master and he are brothers, and one in Christ. Henceforth it would be impossible for Philemon to look on Onesimus as a mere chattel. Christ had put His best robe on him, and His ring and shoes, and he was freeborn in that kingdom into which Philemon himself entered by the way of mercy and the new birth.

It would have been an easy task comparatively to preach deliverance for the slave, if slaves had all belonged to Christian masters. But the Church had to proclaim her message in the ears of those who did not believe in Christ. And yet, in the end, she fulfilled her Master's purpose, and abolished slavery in the countries she civilized. I do not say,—it would be a mis-statement of the facts to say,—that she always addressed herself to this task in Paul's spirit, or in his attitude to the parties and circumstances involved. Oftener far it was by indirect methods, by compromises, by appeal to motives which were other than Christian, by death-bed terrors, or promises of heaven. But even when erring in her methods, she was moving to the purpose of her Master's heart. Her priests stood at the death-beds of wild lords and pled for their thralls, and did not plead in vain. She

herself became a proprietor of lands. She liberated her slaves, and diffused the example of employing free labour. And even when not moving as directly towards this end as she ought,—even when caring for lower things, and giving herself to other interests than those of Christ and humanity,—the influence of the life she commended, and the truths she preached, went on rusting the fetters and unloosing the bonds which kept one half of Europe in thralldom or slavery. It was a slow and tedious work. One generation of slaves after another groaned out their days. Century crawled after century on the field of time. And still there were slaves. But from that hour when Christ was preached, as the Divine Lord and Brother of all men, and of bond and free alike, the abolition of slavery throughout the world was a mere question of time.

It has been our lot to live in the presence of great events:—the Crimean War, the Indian Mutiny, the liberation of Italy, and the civil war in America. But when the history of these events comes to be written by those who, looking at them from a sufficient distance, can see their relative importance, I believe that the liberation of four millions of negro slaves and the abolition of slavery in America,—the results of the last named

war,—will be considered the greatest among them all. But we are very apt, in the circumstances in which we have been placed, to overlook the real forces in that victory. Our ears are still ringing with the names of the braves on either side; our minds are still occupied with the memories of their exploits. The scars of the battles remain on the fields on which they were fought. Witnesses of the terrible conflict limp about the American towns and villages; and the blank places in homes from which joy has been sucked for ever, are silent mementoes of that war. But the war itself was only an outcome of the forces really engaged; only the armed embodiment of the doctrines which years before had powerfully impressed the national mind.

The Americans had received their slaves from their puritan ancestors. They had never known a time when slavery did not exist among them. Their earliest playmates were slave children. Their domestic servants were slaves. Their field and factory workers were slaves. All their language implied the existence of the institution of slavery. It grew up by their side as a nation. It coloured and shaped their laws. It entered into their commerce. It affected their views of the most sacred things. It determined their

morality. It inspired their politics. It ruled their elections. It was a crust on almost every conscience in the land. A vast majority of the people had come to believe the doctrine that it was a Divine institution.

That was the state of things about fifty years before the war. The institution itself, sanctioned by its relations to a great past, fenced in by national and state laws, defended by necessity, by custom, by habit, by vested interests, by convictions, seemed one of the strongest things in the world. About that time, however, the true doctrine concerning the poor negro laid hold of a few Christian hearts on both sides of the Atlantic. The conviction deepened and spread, that Christ was against the institution, and against the entire state of things in which it was embosomed, and the feelings and prejudices which buttressed it up. It was the early ages back again. On the one side, an institution wide-spread, deeply-rooted ; on the other, a doctrine.

Nothing could seem more hopeless than the undertaking to which the first advocates of abolition pledged themselves. They were mobbed, imprisoned, shot at, shot. A hurricane of execration and abuse broke forth against them. They were "disturbers of the peace," "pestilent fellows,"

“fiends in human shape.” But all the while those apostles of liberty were steadily, irresistibly, advancing towards victory. The convictions of their souls spread. Other consciences were arrested by the new doctrine. Other hearts opened their door for it. It began to leaven the public thought, began to write confusion on the counsels of the upholders of the institution. Their ranks wavered, broke up. A party was gradually formed around the Christian doctrine. Light arose, for those who believed it, in the darkness. It drew genius, poetry, eloquence, into its service. It caused its voice to be heard in public meetings of the citizens, at the elections, and in the House of Representatives. It took possession of the sympathies and aspirations of thousands and tens of thousands. It flooded the floor of politics with appeals, with offers of compromise, with threats. And only then, when every peaceful method had been tried in vain,—only when, in the madness of the opposing party, the appeal to battle was made,—did it organise its armies and call forth its heroes, and make its voice audible by the throats of war. But it was the word of Christ which was the real victor in the war which followed. Not Grant, not Sherman, not the North; but Christ in His word, preaching deliverance to the captives; Christ by

His truth reigning in the hearts of His people ;
Christ by His Spirit filling the hearts of the brave
Northerners with the light of that great word :
“ God hath made of one blood all nations of men
for to dwell on all the face of the earth.”

III. THE GOSPEL AND THE PROBLEM.

But it is time now to recur to the problem for which this long survey has been undertaken. It is the problem of liberty in the relations of working men and employers at our own door.

Now, it would only be to defeat the object I wish to serve, to bring any exaggerations into my statements. Let me say at once, therefore, that in using the word “liberty” in the present connection, I do not imply that the working classes of this country are slaves in the sense the negroes were in America, or the Roman slaves in the empire. But, without any exaggeration, it may be said that the liberties which have already been secured to them are only parts of that perfect liberty to which they are entitled.

Having said this, I feel that what remains to be said must be very much an exposition of that perfect liberty, and of the method by which it is to be reached.

Shall I begin with so obvious a proposition as

this?—That every human being is entitled to the liberty intended for him by the Creator. I may have no chains on my ankles, yet be very far from that liberty. If there is anything in my circumstances which restrains my proper development as a man ; anything in my relations with those who employ me, which puts a curb on my faculties, or my opportunities, or my fair rights ; to that extent, and in these things, I am not yet free.

Now, I think no fair and candid soul, looking across that immense plain which is filled and crowded by our labouring classes,—looking with humane eyes at their dwellings, their families, the lives they lead, the kind of health they possess, the share and sort of enjoyment within their reach,—can refuse to admit that the really free men in all that multitude are as yet little more than a handful.

Human freedom means access to everything that God has created for our growth in His image. It means sunlight, fresh air, flowers, music, books, churches, leisure, love. If my wages do not allow me to live in a house which sunlight and fresh air can enter ; if I have nothing to spare for flowers and music and books ; if I cannot buy clothes to go to church in ; if I should be deprived of days of rest and holidays ; if I should be so straitened, that I could not reach to the sweets of marriage

and home ; or, if married, that I must turn my wife and my children into winners of bread for the home ; then, to that extent, and in all these things, I am yet at a distance from liberty. Do I require to say, that I have been describing the case of hundreds of thousands of the labouring classes in this land ?

Perfect freedom means access to everything in the commonwealth which a citizen may justly lay claim to. It means, very especially, access to the very highest culture in the land, and to the very highest employments in the land, for the gifted children of the poor. If we are to have new thought, new vigour, freshness, originality, it is not up among those ranges in society where there can be no aspiration, where every desire has been gratified, where there can at the most only be continuance in wellbeing,—it is down among the homes of the poor where it must spring. If the schooling of children is so dear that the working man cannot pay for it,—if for want of that schooling his gifted boy or girl is hindered from rising in society ; to that extent, and in this thing, he is not yet free. In my native country, the very highest ranks of service in Government, literature, and science, have been recruited from the peasantry, and from the classes in towns who labour

with their hands. And I do not think it is too much to say, that there will not be perfect liberty for the working man till the same thing is possible for the gifted children of the labouring classes over every portion of the land.

That is the evil. What remedy has the preacher of Christ's gospel to apply?

He can do this,—he ought to be continually doing this, until the evil is corrected,—he can bring the light of Christ's cross to bear on the employers with whom he comes in contact, and on those behind them who buy what employers produce. What is required on the part of employers to sweeten the intercourse between master and men is, first of all, real Christian sentiment and faith in the master's heart. Until he feels his own obligations to Christ, and owns Him as his personal Lord, he wants the Divine secret by which he can be perfectly just to his workmen. And until he sees Christ in his workmen, and Christ's claim for generosity and pity and justice, in the heart of their perhaps rudely expressed demands; until he has entered into the light of this fundamental fact for all right intercourse between man and man, that Christ died for his workers as really as for him, and that there is not one Christ for the master and another for the servant, but one Christ

for both, with equal love for both,—the master is not fully equipped for a master's work.

The Christian preacher must denounce that whole state of things wherever he finds it, in which human beings are not spoken of as human beings, and not treated as such, but as *hands, machines*, and mere figures in the items of a contract. Scorn of the working man, the downlook on women who earn their own bread, want of consideration for the feelings, health, or social welfare of the labouring classes, unjust lengthening of the working day, unjust lowering of wages, are parts of slavery, and should receive the hearty reprobation of every labourer in the humane principles of the gospel. And it seems to me, if the pulpit were to take this problem in hand at present, and, in every church of the forty thousand churches in England, let light in upon the employers and families of employers assembled there, and upon their managers and foremen, more would be done to truly solve it, from that side, than all that legislation shall be able to accomplish for generations to come.

But the preacher must work from the other side as well. And no solution of this problem would be complete which left the workman himself unchanged. In vain the passing of just laws, in vain

the cheapening of education, in vain the opening of universities to the gifted sons of the poor, in vain the increase of humanity and liberality among employers, if workmen themselves are not baptized into the life of Christ. It is in their own lives true liberty must begin. And at this moment, it is the duty of every Christian teacher to declare, in the most emphatic way, that there is no liberty, no faith in liberty, no right view of liberty in those among the working classes who either practise, or sanction, or wink at crime and personal violence, in the interest of their craft. He is a slave and a base one, who, in the name of whatever right, fires the hay-rick, or maims the cattle on a farm. He is a slave and a base one, who, in the interests of his union, destroys the wheels by which industrious workers are to win their bread, who mixes broken glass with the clay which the naked feet of men and children are to tread, who flings powder flasks and explosive fire into rooms where innocent people are asleep, or who dogs unsuspecting men day and night for an opportunity to lame them or shoot them dead. The chains which such men wear are upon their own souls. They are slaves by the vile passions they cultivate, by the detestable thoughts they think, by the inhuman deeds to which they have sold themselves. And the liberty

which they require is, before everything else, to have the devils of wickedness and crime cast out of themselves.

Liberty depends on law, and on changes in circumstances, but not entirely. It waits on character and moral worth more closely, and enters by every gate which truth opens into the spirit. Looked at as an attribute of man's individuality, the highest liberty may co-exist with literal chains. The old negro whom Whately tells about, who was lashed to death for being a Christian, and died praying for the forgiveness of the brutal savage who stood directing the lash, was a free man, in spite of the cords which bound him to the whipping post, and the death films which were hastening over his eyes. Everywhere, that is a free man, however restrained by fetters or brutal force, who can render to God the service of a spiritual nature, as that poor negro did.

But this brings both the preacher and this problem into the lists of the daily work of the ministry. He who converts a soul to God, and turns a sinner from the error of his ways, covers a multitude of the most galling evils of slavery. In this way, every stroke of his proper work, by the Christian preacher, is a service rendered to the cause of human liberty. It is his vocation to pro-

claim, in the ears of all to whom he speaks, that perfect freedom begins within. He labours in the light of the conviction that "he only is the free-man whom the truth makes free." And by ministry in the truth which makes free, he seeks the increase of free men in society. If he has well considered his work, he does not allow himself to forget what it is which the truth makes free. He knows that it is not one relationship in social life, nor one isolated part of human life; but that entire, complex, manifold nature which is in every man. The freedom at which the Christian minister aims, is freedom of all the powers and instruments of life in his people from the domination of evil habits and principles; and subjection of their whole being, heart, brain, thought, imagination, speech, act, eye, ear, arm, and feet, to the service and lordship of Christ. For Christ's free-man is at once bond and free. In respect of everything which hinders, abridges, or abases, his worth as a man,—in respect of sin, and vice, and crime,—*free*; but in respect of righteousness and the law of love, *bound*. It is his glory to serve Christ. His nature expands, his soul puts forth the finest blossoms, his whole life becomes fruitful in this service. Whatever his circumstances as a workman may be, he has solved the problem of liberty.

He takes patiently, if need be, the buffeting of an ungentle master, remembering Him who patiently endured the cross. He takes hardships, hungry days, and a narrow home, as discipline from the hands of his Father. And the very evils in his lot which, as a citizen, he may justly complain of, and try to remove, bear fruit for his soul, and advance the growth of his character.

But is that all? Has the converted workman merely reached a cross? Is this the solution which Christianity proposes for this great problem—to turn the lot of its poor toilers into a Calvary? No. But by suffering, it perfects its children. And as Christ passed up to the crown from Calvary—the workman, who suffers for Christ's sake, becomes every day a more regal force in the workshop. By his very character, he puts on a crown, which employers, were their hearts of brass, will be compelled to respect and reverence.

Give me workshops filled with Christian men. Employers might still impose unjust restrictions, but every day would increase the indisposition to enforce them. Confidence in the character of their men would take the place of suspicion. Consideration of the master's difficulties would have a place in the workmen's thoughts. Work purified from eye-service would be rendered for

the wages received. And quietly and gradually, but surely, sweetness, humanity, and justice would come up into this great relationship between masters and men.

“The founders of Christianity bade the slave remain a slave, but it was in order that he might not imperil the sacred deposit of Christian principle which bore with it the redemption of the slave for ever. The kingdom of Christ was not of this world ; but, nevertheless, its liegemen looked forward to the day when ‘the kingdoms of this world should become the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ, and that He should reign for ever and ever.’”—*Goldwin Smith*, “*Does the Bible sanction American Slavery?*”

“Christianity for the first time gave the servile virtues the foremost place in the moral type. Humility, obedience, gentleness, patience, resignation, are all cardinal or rudimentary virtues in the Christian character ; they were all neglected or underrated by the pagans ; they can all expand or flourish in a servile position.

“The first and grandest edifice of Byzantine architecture in Italy, the noble church of St. Vital, at Ravenna, was dedicated, by Justinian, to the memory of a martyred slave.”—*Lecky*, “*History of Morals*,” vol. ii., pp. 72, 73.

V.

*THE PREACHER AS AN EDUCATOR.—
NATIONAL EDUCATION.*

“And recovering of sight to the blind.”

CIRCUMSTANCES might exist in which it would be the preacher's duty to deal with blindness in the most literal sense. If it were the case, for example, that no one was caring for the thirty thousand in England who are deprived of their eyesight; it would belong to the Christian teacher to bring out his Master's sympathy for this class, and to stir up the humanity of His people until they were cared for, and brought as near to the blessings of life as people deprived of one of their senses can be brought.

Or, I shall suppose that he finds, in the field he occupies, a wide-spread blindness of intellect. The people have no schools, and are growing up ignorant of the very elements of school instruction. They have no taste for anything but what is depraving and brutish; no delight in thought; no power to read; no wish to acquire the power. It

would be the duty of the preacher, in these circumstances, to direct attention to this great lack in social well-being, and to stir up the Church to an interest in the work, and not to rest until that work was done. And, so far as I have read Church history, I have found that those times when the life of Christ in the Church was most intense, were times in which she concerned herself most in the common education of the people. In her mission fields, it is as much a matter of course for the missionaries to build schoolrooms as churches. They repair to the schools daily to teach the alphabet and reading and writing to old and young : schoolmasters on week-days ; preachers on Sunday,—say, rather, preachers and teachers together every day of their lives. In a country emerging from barbarism, where only privileged classes received instruction in such learning, it would be the Church's duty to assert the right of every member of the community to this privilege, and to take no rest until this right was obtained. To the end of time it will never be forgotten that John Knox, in such circumstances, asserted this right for the common people of Scotland, and procured that every parish church in the country should have beside it, and under its care, a well-equipped parish school.

And at this moment, when the shadows are gathering around the temporal power of the Papacy, it is only just to point back to one John-Knox-like exercise of this power, which, if everything else should be condemned, must shine as an everlasting brightness around the triple crown. I refer to the establishment of universities in Europe. It has been truly said, and by a historian who grudges the smallest morsels of praise to any Church, "that in the history of human things there is to be found no grander conception than that of the Church of the fifteenth century, when it resolved, in shape of the universities, to cast the light of knowledge abroad over all the Christian world. . . . The university was to be the same in rank, and, if possible, in wealth and grandeur, whether it arose in the possible capital of some powerful state, or was planted in some distant region, among a scanty people, poor and rude. . . . It was the fulfilment of the Church's mission to raise up an intellectual power fit to cope with brute force, feudalism, burgher wealth, and the elements of the material governing influence."¹

When the Wesleys began their work the com-

¹ Burton, *His. Scot.* vol. iv. 109.

mon people were sunk in the most appalling ignorance. It is to the labours of these men, and the spiritual impulse they were the means of communicating, and not to any legislation, or other spirit of the age, that we owe the amount of knowledge, reading, and thought diffused at present among the common people of England. And these great men were not merely indirectly the cause of this increase in knowledge—they set themselves to the work. John Wesley, especially, is to be mentioned with grateful honour, as the promoter of schools for the people, and the real beginner of a cheap and wholesome literature.

But although these things have been done by preachers of the gospel; and although circumstances might arise any day in which they would require to set themselves to the doing of them; and although there never can occur a time in which it shall cease to be a concern to them, whether people ignorant of book-learning, have instruction and schools, and people physically blind, asylums and training and employment,—attention to such things is not their proper and ultimate work. The blindness they have been set to remove is neither that of the outer eye nor of the intellect. It is that blindness which is central in man, which unfits him for his highest tasks, and is a film not

on the eye of his body, nor of his intellect, but on that of the spirit itself.

A man might be physically blind. He might be shut out from sun and star, from the sight of the green fields and the beautiful sea. But he would not on that account be among the blind whose sight the minister of the gospel is to recover. He might be blind Sampson, but with clear-seeing enough in his spiritual region to be still a fighter for God ; or blind Saul of Tarsus, with a soul breaking up from its inner darkness, towards new and higher floors of vision ; or blind Milton, singing "of man's first disobedience, and the fruit of that forbidden tree."

A man might be intellectually blind. He might have no book-learning, no knowledge of the sciences, and no skill in any speech but his own. But he would not on that account, either, be among the blind whose sight the Church is set to recover. He might be one of the old Northmen, Christian enough to be a just and loving king of men ; or the head of some great commercial company, Christian enough to carry on his business in the fear of God ; or he might be one of Wesley's first converts—some illiterate miner, without book-learning enough to read the Bible or learn a hymn ; or any of the thousand forms in which real

Christian life and clear-seeing shows itself among a people ignorant of books.

In either case the blindness is only partial and superficial. It does not touch the springs of a man's worth to society and the cause of God.

But if a man be blind spiritually,—blind in the region where faith and love should dwell,—blind to the light which Christ has brought down among men,—in that case he is blind in respect of the main and high functions which pertain to him as a man. The blindness is central, and will make itself felt from the highest reach of his being down. It will diffuse itself through his thoughts, affections, aims, motives, desires, and actions. If there are two men blind in this sense, there are two human orces, working without the light in which alone they can work to righteous ends. If there be a whole cityful, there is that whole cityful of busy human energy, seething with passions, with greeds, with ambitions,—active, resolute, unresting,—yet all blind to the very light by which alone this tremendous mass and turmoil of force could be guided into right channels and towards righteous ends. It was just such a cityful of blind force which once expressed itself in the cry, "Not this Man, but Barabbas!" And just such another cityful which, thirsting also for blood, on another occasion, "for

the space of two hours, cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians."

That is the blindness which it is the special duty of the Christian preacher to deal with, and, if possible, remove. And in this land, at this moment, there are thousands and tens of thousands—whole districts—of human beings smitten and driven by by this blindness, or sitting helpless and isolate at the gateways of duty, unconsciously waiting for the sound of the footsteps of Him who alone can open their eyes, and waiting all through life in vain, because the Church and her preachers have been slack in possessing the land.

I.

Let us examine some of these, that we may thoroughly acquaint ourselves with this blindness. Look once more on that immense breadth of our social life which is filled by the employers and employed, and consider the character of the relations which subsist between the two at present. In the ideal, or perfect state, of these relations, there should be no contention between master and workman, except the contention of rendering the noblest service to the country. Their interests are one. Their labour is one. But at this moment they are hostile camps. The employers

are combined to protect themselves against the workmen; the workmen, to defend themselves from their employers. It is not to the point to raise the question:—Who is to blame? It is not necessary, in dealing with the problem of education, to determine this question. Determining this question would still leave the main, the momentous fact, as it stood; and employers and employed would go on fearing, suspecting, and warring against each other. The underlying question is this: What is it in employer and employed alike which has led to this alienation? What sustains it?—It is this, that the eyes of the dwellers in this entire world of labour are still shut to the fact of the Lordship of Christ in their domain. The one side does not see its obligation to serve *Him* in their daily works,—Him, and not man. The other side does not see that Christ is Lord over capital as well as labour, and for the interest of labour as truly as of capital. Both sides are blind to His presence in their particular sphere, and to the fact, that in His kingdom there is no division of race, or blood, or nationality. “*He has broken down the middle wall of partition—for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace.*” Both require to be instructed in the blessed and healing wisdom, that Christ is Lord over all to

bless men in their daily tasks. Lord over rich and poor alike, and rich in mercy to both ; and that both masters and workmen are responsible to Him for the rendering of a just hire, a just reverence, and a just consideration of the difficulties on either side.

From those two camps, in their mutual relation, turn to what we may call the class enjoyments of the encamped, and look at the inner lives they are leading. It is a long time now since the noble sentences I am about to quote, were written ; but they are as true and as full of a pathetic regret to-day as when they were first published :—

“ Strange as it may sound, the employers of labour are the successors of the feudal barons. They it is who lead thousands to peaceful conquests, and upon whom, in great measure, depends the happiness of large masses of mankind. Mr. Carlyle says, ‘ the leaders of industry, if industry is ever to be led, are virtually the captains of the world ; if there be no nobleness in them, there will never be an aristocracy more.’ Can a man, who has this destiny entrusted to him, imagine that his vocation consists merely in getting together a large lump of gold, and then being off with it, to enjoy it, as he fancies in some other place ; as if that, which is but a small part of the business in

life, were all in all to him ; as if, indeed, the parable of the talents were to be taken literally, and that a man should think that he has done his part, when he has made much gold and silver out of little? If these men saw their position rightly, what would be their objects, and what their pleasures? Their objects would not consist in foolish vyings with each other about the grandeur or glitter of life. But in directing the employment of labour they would find room for the exercise of all the powers of their minds, of their best affections, and of whatever was worthy in their ambition.”¹

The toilers have no ambition. They merely wish to clear out a free space in which to live. How full of sadness and monotony is the life of Christless workmen in England at present! The employers have their enjoyments, however earthly ; but what have the employed? From the age of twelve or fourteen till old age, it is a life of unremitting toil : rising early and working late ; with few joys, and without the capacity of the higher joys. No holiday sight, I think, can be drearier than a Sunday excursion train filled by workpeople, and this apart entirely from the consideration, that it is a misuse of that day. Is that pleasure to

¹ “Claims of Labour,” p. 34.

have to rise in the raw morning, to be crowded up in dismal cars without a bit of colour or comfort in them, like so many cattle; to be spoken to by guards and ticket-takers in the insolent tone reserved for third-class passengers,—as if they were so many pickpockets and beggars,—and then to be let loose in some distant town, where they are despised as excursionists, to recreate themselves as they can, to wander about streets which are only disturbed by their presence, to lounge about fields which they do not know how to enjoy, to drink it may, be to play foolish games perhaps, and at length to return, every fourth member of the party dazed with drink, worn out with fatigue, and not one out of twenty refreshed by the green fields, or the blue skies, which they ostensibly went to see? Take any of those poor people apart, and ask them concerning the purpose of human existence in this beautiful world. They do not understand the question. They were born to toil. They are leading lives which are a mere succession of days of toil—a mere drudgery at tasks which help to meet the necessities of the passing hour. But of the beauty which is in blue skies and running streams, of the light which is diffused for the mind of man in all things we see, and still more of that unseen world which is the proper dwelling-

place of the spirit that is in man ; or of that Ruler who is the Lord of that spirit, or of that sublime death by which He expressed His love to man ; of a future life, of that future life as the issue, for weal or woe, of our doing or misdoing here ;—of all these things they are ignorant. Their eyes are holden that they cannot see.

As I am writing these sentences, the autumn meeting of our local races is being held. This amusement is set forth everywhere as our great national sport. Our parliament suspends its labours on the Derby day. Come with me, then, and take a sober glance at the sport. Look at that train by which the spectators and the people interested in the races arrive. The cars of all classes are full. To the majority among those first-class people, the race-course is only one excitement among many. They come to it for a fresh sensation, just as they go to the opera, the theatre, and, on Sundays, to the church. People of this sort touch this sport, if I might so express it, with gloved hands, and are, of all that crowd, perhaps the least defiled by it. But mixed up with them, known by the style of dress they affect, are the racing men, “the patrons of the turf,” the owners of the horses, the fast men of society. There they are, leading lives in connection with this

sport, more full of trickery, meanness, gambling, and all base unrighteousness, than any other class, high or low, in the land. What is Sunday to fellows like these? Or the church? or Christ? or, in any but a narrow, technical sense, human honour? Below these, in the second-class carriages, are the people who, in some humbler way, are professionally related to the course: the book-makers, the jockeys, the local committee, the people who make a part, or the whole, of their living by this sport. Last of all, in those third-class cars, you will see the victims proper,—the souls who believe in the pleasure, who have sold themselves to it, and have mistaken it for a gateway into bliss. Young lads, many of them, who have stolen hither for the excitement, who have ventured their little savings, or the money sent up from loving homes, in blind bets on horses. And old men, old before their time,—who were once what these young lads are, and are now the wrecks of that former time, wrecks of men,—men who have known shame and crime, and handcuffs and prison cells. And up and down in this company, there are women—bold and bad, with histories which no man would willingly write, with influences which it is death to come under.

Come near for once in your lives to this mixed

multitude as it closes around the winning-post, and try to decipher the passions which darken, blanch, and irradiate by turns, that bank of faces as the winning horse comes in. Are these the passions, think you, which the Maker of men intended His human creatures to indulge? Can that mad joy, that mad rage, that terror, whitening down to thoughts of suicide, be justified in the light of any divinely revealed ideal of human life? Do these people think of God, or of a Divine claim upon their lives, or of an unseen world, at such moments, or at all? Would they take part in the system in which the sport is enshrined, in its defilements, its hazards, its wicked temptations, its excitements, its terrible issues, if, as a habit of their lives, they believed at all? It is incredible. They are in utter ignorance of God, of immortality, of a judgment day. They are worshippers of chance: priests and votaries, victims and victimizers, in a cruel, irrational, and unholy excitement; the supporters of an institution which has gathered around it in terrible and increasing quantities, gambling, blackguardism, cheating, meanness, drunkenness, madness, and ruin. The whole system is built up on the tacit assumption that there is no God and no future world; and it is supported by people who are either blind to the existence, or are shut-

ting out the claims, of the unseen and the eternal, and need to be educated in these very realities.

In that, as in everything else, there will be individuals who are exceptions. I am referring to the general crowd who are promoting and extending this sport in our country just now. They outnumber the Christians of the land. They give more for this pleasure than we give for our missions. It is of this system I say deliberately, that it exists, because those who support it are ignorant of the highest things which belong to our life. It could not exist one year, nor find the favour it does, nor go on sending its ramifications into every town and village as it is doing, and its literature and advertisements into every newspaper, and its betting-books into the hands of so many, both young and old, unless there existed in this country an enormous amount of life and thought, on which the light which Christ died to reveal,—the elemental force in noble living,—the light of a knowledge of a God who is calling us to lead His own life,—has either never fallen, or fallen in vain. The Churches are silent just now ; and this great evil is on the increase. But it cannot but be felt, when the Spirit of the Lord shall rest with power upon the people, as it did upon their Master, that the silence must be broken, that the word of the Lord

must be spoken, and that His light and truth must be sent forth on the blinded crowds who flock to this sport.

But these are mere examples from the heap. Not in the workshop only, nor on the race-course alone, but in every department and rank of our social life this spiritual blindness is to be found. The blind in this sense are round about us wherever we go. The immense majority of all the people we mingle with and see have never had the film unloosed, which shuts out from the human spirit the vision of the Divine love.

II.

I shall now, therefore, take another step in this inquiry, and consider, "*Whether, outside of Christian teaching, any light exists by which this ignorance can be removed?*"

Fairly to enter on this consideration, it is necessary first to ask:—What is required to remove this ignorance?—what, for the spiritual enlightenment and education of a people? I reply,—above everything else, *Knowledge of the Divine Mercy and Human Immortality*. Those are the two facts to which the spiritually ignorant are mainly blind. For want of the light which is in them, when known, masses of people in this country go stum-

bling on in such blind fashions as we have seen. A knowledge that such an element as mercy exists in the universe ; that it is the pre-eminent quality of His character by whom we have been made ; and that we who live on the earth, and seem merely to be following the generations who have been before us and descended into the dust, are not what we seem, but immortal creatures, with relations to the Divine mercy, which are to last on—for good or for evil, as we accept it, or reject it—for ever ;—this knowledge, if it could be shed down universally on English life, as Christ's gospel proposes to shed it down, would purify what is impure, banish what is hateful, and put to shame what is base and vile and depraved in all the abysses of our social existence.

Is this knowledge attainable, is there any means of teaching it, outside of the circle on which the light of Christ's gospel is falling ?

The highest and strongest thought of our country just now is flowing in the channels of scientific research. More earnest, more worthy men never represented scientific thought. Unlike some of their predecessors, these men have recognised the responsibility of all possessors of knowledge to diffuse their stores. And they have even admitted the pressure of the obligation to consider the

condition of the people. Having for themselves accepted the conclusions of science as the One revelation and All of truth attainable by man, they have assumed the position of spiritual teachers. And, by the establishment of Sunday evening lectures for the people, they have recognised the duty of handling the high problem of salvation. In the person of one of their most distinguished men, they threw down, at the Dundee meeting of the British Association, the challenge to all religious thought based on anything else but science. And they have thereby, and in various other ways, virtually affixed the new-reformation thesis on the doors of the Christian Church, "that it is by science alone the soul is to be saved."

It is but small courage in any one who believes the gospel to accept this challenge. No induction of the scientific intellect has that witness of the Spirit, that deepest and surest evidence of truth possessed by men, which the facts of the gospel have. But I will not argue in depths like this. I shall simply refer to the two facts I have mentioned, on which, more than on anything else, the spiritual education of a people, or the salvation of their souls, must depend,—the Divine mercy, and the Immortality of the soul. It is ignorance of these facts, and not of even the highest facts

handled by scientific research, which constitutes spiritual ignorance in men or nations.

Let us turn with the most candid minds to the nature and range, and to the facts and principles of science, and search in the light supplied by those who teach it, for those two indispensable facts. We shall search in vain. The best light of the scientific teacher does not penetrate to the region to which these facts belong; and any attempt to reach these facts by the way of science can only prosper by making indirect use of the very gospel which it formally rejects. It is not too much to say, that in the light supplied by any experience known to us, which our race has had upon the earth, there is no possibility of nobleness, or hope, or progress, or love among men, even on this side of the grave, without knowledge of those two facts. And to those two facts not only can scientific students never by their best science arrive, but they are, the further they proceed on their lines of study, driven more widely away from them.

It is the high function of science to examine the material world, to sift its forces, and to discover its laws. If at the end it has reached, by some sublimer generalization than before, to the fact of a Lawgiver, it is well. But even then, the vision will be of a Lawgiver represented only by those

forces of the material universe, and revealing Himself only in the laws to which these forces are subject. Now, *so* revealed, there is but one practical word for man. It is the word which the Divine fingers have inscribed so deeply on the stone tables of science: "As a man soweth, so shall he reap; and that which he soweth he shall reap." That word—broad, unmistakeable, shining in a thousand places—science shows written all over the universe. And it can, by its own light, point to none besides. It cannot penetrate the cloud to see who this Lawgiver is, or indeed whether He is at all; and therefore it misses the lesson which Christ read in the lily. It admits no connection between the heart of a personal God and the event which occurs in the life of a man on the earth. If a man is sick, it is because the laws of health have been broken by himself or another; if he is well, it is because these laws have been observed. There are no personal interpositions between the Creator and the creature. There is nothing but the fixed sequences of law. But that means for man, a universe ruled over by justice, and *only* by justice. Everywhere—always justice! Not one hint of mercy! Not one faintest ray of a light that would bring hope to a soul who had become obnoxious to justice—who had been sowing

evil all the days of his youth, or of his manhood ! Not one word to encourage him to look up to the Lawgiver, and say, "Remember not the sins of my youth." Not one word to justify the faith that "with God there is forgiveness, that He may be feared." No. The music of the sphere, as rendered by these composers, knows no such song—never can know such song—as Christians have been taught to sing :

"As far as east is distant from the west, so far hath He
From us removèd, in His love, all our iniquity."

And as with the Divine mercy, so with human Immortality. By the same restrictions which blind them to the quality of mercy in the universe, scientific teachers exclude any glimpse of this second fact. As a result of scientific research, therefore, scientific men can never arrive at the knowledge of a resurrection of the dead. Their one organ of perception is intellect ; their method, induction or analysis. Such words as we find in the New Testament,—*"He that loveth not knoweth not ;"* *"He that believeth shall live for ever ;"* *"Christ is risen,"*—are spoken outside of the circle they occupy, and in a language they do not understand. It is to provoke a smile in the

more assured among them, to ask them to accept the testimony which we accept concerning the resurrection of our Lord. Such an event is unknown in the world of science, and therefore incredible.

“We ne’er have seen the law
Reversed, ’neath which we lie :
Exceptions none are found,
And when we die, we die.
Resigned to fact, we wander hither,
We ask no more the Whence or Whither.”¹

From the books of science, then, no word can ever be drawn which shall bring light to the human race concerning the cloud which rests on the grave. Their books admit no miracles. And the highest miracles are Resurrection and Immortality. Of life after death, of a future world, of an unending existence in that world, we can never hear from the teachers of science. And they are at this moment in arms against the whole region of the miraculous, in which Resurrection and Immortality lie.

I have tried to give a true statement of the limits of scientific teaching. But here are these limits indicated by one of its most resolute pro-

¹ F. T. Palgrave. From his fine poem, *The Reign of Law*, in which he replies to the scientific unbelief expressed in the verse quoted.

fessors, and one of the band who give Sunday lectures to the people. He is about to set forth life as a game which each of us has to play with God. And he begins by insisting on the importance of our understanding the conditions and secrets of the play.

“It is a game which has been played for untold ages, every man and woman of us being one of the two players in a game of his or her own. The chess-board is the world, the pieces the phenomena of the universe, the rules of the game are what we call the laws of nature. The player on the other side is hidden from us. All we know is that his play is always fair, just, and patient ; but, also, *that he never overlooks a mistake, or makes the smallest allowance for ignorance.* To the man who plays well the highest stakes are paid with that sort of overflowing generosity with which the strong shows delight in strength. And one who plays ill is checkmated *without haste, but without remorse.* My metaphor will remind some of you of the famous picture in which Retsch has depicted Satan playing at chess with man for his soul. Substitute for the mocking fiend in that picture a calm strong angel who is playing for love, as we say, and would rather lose than win, and I should accept it as an image of human life. Well now, what I mean by education is learning the rules of this mighty game. In other words, education is the instruction of the intellect in the laws of nature ; and the fashioning of the affections and of the will into harmony with those laws.”¹

For men, to whom this is creed, to gather the blind people about them and give Sunday lectures,

¹ Professor Huxley.

is surely a conspicuous exhibition of the blind leading the blind.

I think, therefore, there never was a time in which the ministers of Christ's word more behoved to stir themselves up to their great function of educating the spiritual faculties of the people than at present. Spiritual blindness is fallen on learned and unlearned. And the blind are blind, and know it not. Poor men are leading lives on which no sun of mercy, no heaven of immortal life is shining. And men, rich in the resources and conquests of intellect, are bending their great powers to prove, that there is no domain of mercy, no domain of miracle, in the universe.

Christ has entrusted to His preachers light on these very facts. He has revealed the mercy. He has brought the life and immortality to light. And His people are the vessels of this light. We are to carry it to every child of man who is still blind to it. And the express mission of the Christian pulpit is this, by the application of the light itself to recover the sight of the blind. Incarnation, atonement, resurrection,—these are the three colours in this rainbow. By these our life here has been overarched. And they shine to tell man, and the poorest of men, of a Divine Saviour near us, in the midst of us, in our hearts,

in our homes, in our places of toil ; and of a Divine mercy which has new chances for erring creatures, and hope for the furthest fallen ; and of a Divine home in the heavens, where our fellowship shall be with God and His Son for ever. Endowed with this light, which, as a witness, the preacher has himself seen in the face of God, he dare not refuse to take his place among the educators at this momentous crisis. The arresting fact is, that we are living in the midst of multitudes who are ignorant of God. These multitudes are beside us, living in the same towns, travelling by the same railways, working in the same work-fields, trafficking in the same markets, sailing in the same ships, with the people to whom we are preaching every Sabbath. And we are God's light-bearers to bring light to these blinded souls outside. And the Spirit of the Lord is upon us, that by our ministry we may help them to recover their sight, that they may see God and live. And in all this land, if we neglect our task, or despair of it, there are none else to undertake it.

The other day I read in Mr. Arnold's "New Poems," this view of the spiritual condition of the world at present. The poet is standing on Dover beach at night, and hears

“The grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves suck back and fling,
At their return, up the high strand ;
Begin and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.”

And in that he hears a type of departing faith, for he adds:

“The sea of faith
Was once too at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled ;
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating to the breath
Of the night-wind down the edges drear,
And naked shingles of the world.”

In words like these there is no light for the blind—no hope of recovered sight. They are the sigh of a despairing heart. But for this very reason they could never be the words of the Christian teacher. They express a fact, it is true, and it is impossible to doubt the fact. No one, looking candidly at the spiritual life of our country at present, will deny that Mr. Arnold is so far right. But only so far. It is the truth, but not the whole truth, which his lines portray. Sad though the time is, it is only sad as night is in relation to day, as the ebb is in relation to the flow. If the Christian Church, as the appointed educator of the spiritual, be true to

her vocation, a better time shall come. And when it comes, men looking back will say, this was its necessary precursor. The sea of faith is at the ebb just now; but it is not for ever. The creeks and bays of human life in this land shall be filled as before. In the swing of the great forces of the soul from revelation to science, from faith to reason, our lot has been to be cast in a time in which the set or drift of thought is towards science. And it cannot but happen to an age which is caught in such a tide, that the eyes of men shall be blinded to the facts they are leaving behind, and open only for those they are approaching. It would be very foolish to deny that at this moment the eyes of some of the strongest minds amongst us are closed to the light of the gospel; and that, because they are following the trail of the light of the angel of science. What then? Shall this movement go on uncared for? Shall souls in the very highest region of thought, save one, be blind, and Christ's teachers make no sign? Is it enough to sigh over prevailing unbelief? Or would it help the evil to hurl anathemas at science? No. The duty of the Christian Church is to sustain and extend her own testimony, and, both by the life of her membership, and the teaching of her pulpits, to send forth her light and her truth as the very forces which are

certain to lead to a turn of the tide. It may be that it shall seem a preaching of God's word "out of season." But even this is included in our task. "In season and out of season" we are to ply it. And in the ebb and in the flow of faith we are to hold fast and hold forth the word of life.

Those seekers on the sea which science searches can only find what their predecessors found. They have been carried out one reach farther, it may be, on the tide, but it is only to discover the terrible emptiness, the abysses and speechless blanks, which have repelled human hearts before. For them too comes an hour when the soul is weary of searching—a still hour, in which they will know that they have closed their hands upon nothingness; and when, far behind them on the shore they have left, they may hear the voices of brothers who are singing praises to the light. Not only must these men fail in any attempt to educate the spiritual life of the people, but they themselves as much need the gospel as the humblest peasant in the land. And, meantime, the people are perishing for lack of the knowledge which only the gospel can impart. Let us awake to our great vocation. We carry the light without which neither earth nor heaven can be truly known,—the only light by which the souls of men can be saved. And it should be our glory

to vindicate, by gospel testimony, for the spirit of man, an inheritance in regions beyond the reach of science ; and out of our living consciousness of the truth, to assert and commend the attractions of a world, better and more enduring than that in which the toiling masses at present are groping their sad and solitary way.

Everything which surrounds a people takes part in their education. Acting on this conviction, the Roman Catholic Church erects crosses at the corners of streets, and builds chapels on the wayside. Her churches, convents, masses, processions, and saints' days, are all meant to have a moulding influence on the general life. And Wordsworth has pointed out how the surroundings of natural scenery serve to educate :

“ The floating clouds their state shall lend
To her—for her the willows bend ;
Nor shall she fail to see,
Even in the motions of the storm,
Grace which shall mould the maiden's form
By silent sympathy.”

But it is not on natural scenery, or architecture, or processions, or feast-days, we must depend. And it happens that the populations of Catholic countries, and of agricultural districts in our own, are not happy illustrations of the education which

is in surroundings like these. The beauty with which a people should be surrounded, is the beauty of holiness in the daily lives of those with whom they come in contact. They should open their eyes every morning in homes filled with Christian purity and tenderness. When they go forth to their daily labour, they should feel that they are among a people whose actions are leavened by magnanimity, reverence, self-sacrifice, and honour. When they buy and sell, it should be in an atmosphere of probity. The books they read should take them to the gates of all noble truth. Science should be God's angel unfolding His mighty works. And heaven and earth should be so filled by the presence of Christ, that the people would know themselves to be already denizens of the new heaven and earth, and moving about, in their most common tasks, beside the unseen form of Him who died for them on the tree. These are the possibilities which lie in the gospel as a power of national education, and there can be no resting from the labours of Christian preachers in this country until they are realized.

Let us refuse to listen too earnestly to those who depreciate our labours, or reproach us for our unsuccess. The depreciation and the reproach are alike unjust. Why should it be a reproach to the

Church

Christian Church, for example, that men of science are often absent from her assemblies? It is only so much more of the human blindness which she is appointed to remove. In every century there comes a time when unbelief increases; it belongs to the Church, and especially to the teachers in the Church, in such a time to hold aloft her banner more bravely, and shed forth more abundantly of her light. No doubt it would be a happier lot if they could come forth like the sun, and pour down their light from the heights of influence on a world all ready to receive it. But it should be happiness no less, to true sons of the Church, if that is denied to them, to take the form of a servant, and come quietly up among the shadows, as moon or star, knowing this, that the light they supply is all the same, though reflected—the light of their Lord.

And let no faint heart among us say, What am I in my obscure sphere? or, Who, in any sphere, is sufficient for such a work? It may seem as if individually we could do little. But it is not so. Men are not cured of blindness in companies, but one by one. And the touch which alone can take the scales from the eye is the touch of Christian truth. Let each of us who preach be verily a vessel of Christ's light. Let us be certain that we are both receivers and givers of this light. It is

with the light as with the wind. It shineth whither it listeth : thou seest the gleam, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth. But it is all the while doing its appointed work. No ray of it is lost. And from some quiet Christian life, quietly shining in its own little nook, an influence received from the word may be going forth daily, all unknown, all unsuspected, for the recovery of blind souls to the light. We may have no access, in our spheres, to people of learning or influence ; our labours may be confined to the poor and the ignorant. But it has ever been from among these that God has replenished the hosts of the children of light. "I thank thee, O Father, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and the prudent, and revealed them unto babes." And this is our wisdom, who are preachers of the word—to labour among the babes, if that is our only sphere ; among the poorest of the people, if it be there. But anywhere and everywhere to let our light shine. It is real work to let Christ's light shine. It is successful work to shed it lovingly on any human life, old or young. We shall not be discouraged if only one here and another there should be admitted into the light. For this is the way of God. Out in the darkness He kindles little centres at different points. For a

long time, they are faint and feeble, mere stars shining over a dark world. But a day comes when the centres multiply, the circles join, and the whole world is bathed in splendour.¹

¹ May it not be, my beloved Simmias, that this is no *right* path to virtue, to barter pleasures for pleasures, and pains for pains, and fear for fear, and the greater for the less, like worthless coin? May it not be, that only one coin exists for which to expend all these, *the knowledge of truth*? That for this, and with this, all things in very deed are bought and sold,—courage, and temperance, and justice ; that, in a word, but one true virtue exists,—*the virtue which is founded upon the knowledge of truth*, whether pleasure and pains and the like be added to it, or taken away? But apart from a knowledge of truth, and bartered one against the other, may not such a goodness be but the shadow of a substance, the virtue of a slave, with no soundness or reality in it?—*Plato*.

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VI.

THE PREACHER AS A LIBERATOR.— THE CRUSHED CLASSES.

“To set at liberty them that are bruised.”

Liber

THIS is the last class to which Christ offers Himself as a Consoler. It is also the most numerous. The purpose of love, sweeping downward from the heart of God, reaches, in this class, the very base of the pyramid of social misery.

Hitherto, the Lord has been speaking of familiar sorrows. Poverty, broken-heartedness, bondage, and ignorance, have been known to us from our childhood. And we have conceptions more or less correct of the sufferings they imply. But who has studied the ills which are here generalized as a bruise?

Ah! these are the terrible ills which exist, but have no name, and which, being unnamed, are so often overlooked and suffered to work on. Lying beyond those wrongs we have been examining, sometimes concealed by them, they are as intolerable and full of woe. These are the wrongs which blow about society, and search it through; which lurk and insinuate themselves into the thoughts and

feelings, the bodily habits, the ways of life, and the domestic relationships, and are supposed to be inevitable, and do not seem wrong until they are brought into the light of the cross.

“Them that are bruised!” As I repeat the words a curtain seems to rise before me, and an exceeding great multitude, which no man can number, crowds upon my view. All classes, the highest and the most debased, and all forms of human life are here. These are the people who have to bear the unseen tyrannies of life, whose affections are wounded, whose rights are outraged whose homes are darkened, whose consciences are hurt, whose bodies are crushed, whose development is hindered, whose souls are stunted, whose characters are demoralized, by the unreason, the ignorance, the folly, the madness, the superstition, the ambition, the greed, the cruelty, or the neglect of their fellow-men. Behind each of the evils which Paul saw in the heathen world he went forth to Christianize, stood an immense crowd of bruised lives. Crowds as great exist and suffer still, after all these ages of Christian teaching, behind the veils which modern civilization hangs up between the work-a-day world and the unexplored nooks and shadows in which the bruised conceal their wounds.

My difficulty is where to begin. I want to exhibit the innumerableness, the variety, the wretchedness, the reality, and the greatness of the sufferings of "them that are bruised." By which door shall we enter in? Through what individual, or class, among all that multitude, can we best be introduced to the multitude itself? It is the trampled-on and the repressed I have to bring forward; the crushed classes in society; and, but that our survey is restricted, it would include the debased races among mankind.

The repression and abrasion of individual liberty, the stifled thoughts of the persecuted, the outraged feelings of the pious, the natural affections which have no return; the sacrifices which have no recognition; the toils which have no recompense; the wrongs which have no champion; the sufferings which have no sympathy,—all take us into the very heart of that multitude, who dwell in such shadows, and have to carry their hidden or open bruise.

What an immense number of our fellow-creatures have been bruised in the most literal sense! Fifteen hundred lives were lost in our mines last year; nearly nine hundred lost their lives by shipwreck on our coasts. These numbers may help to indicate the greater numbers who are hurt

or maimed for life. The factories have their quota of accidents every year; so have the machine shops, the building yards, and the chemical works. And hundreds are precipitated into hopeless poverty yearly by the accidents on our railways, on our streets, and in our docks.

But these are, after all, the slightest of the bruises. The tragic ones are those which hurt the soul, the heart, the sense of justice, the character, the home.

Look at that mother. From early morning till late night, she toils without resting for her children. She has no thought in which their welfare is not mingled, no prayer in which their good is not sought; she abridges her own liberty to increase theirs, and sacrifices her own comfort that they may be comforted; and yet, from early morning till late night, has never the solace of one kind word or look, but only and ever the experience of undeserved reproaches, taunts, neglects, indignities, which cut into her very soul, and put a bruise on her entire life. There are thousands around us who have to endure that bruise.

Here is a common labourer. He has been serving society in his humble sphere for forty years at least. From youth to manhood, from manhood to old age, he has paced the same monotonous

little round of toil. He has gone out and come in amid cold and heat, and never, for one day of all that time, has he been free from the obligation to work. He has had no holidays, hardly even unbroken Sundays. And yet never, during all those days and years of service, has he received one kindly recognition from his employers, never one encouraging reward, never one advance in wages; but from stage to stage has had to pace his beat of joyless labour, and endure the hardship and the neglect, as if he were a dead, insensitive machine, or a beast of burden. There are tens of thousands in the land who have to carry that bruise, and whose cry is going up to God.

Silas Todd, one of the remarkable men raised up by Wesley, was in the habit of visiting the condemned in prison. He tells some stories concerning them in his life, which draw tears even at this distance of time. A poor fellow was out of employment: his wife and children were starving. Under a sudden temptation, he demanded money of two women in Hoxton fields. One gave him twopence, the other fourpence. So unused was he to this life, so little aware that he had used violent and threatening language, that he walked quietly behind the women into the town and was given up. For this sixpence he had to die. His wife

came to see him in the cell. And Todd says, "I have not seen such sweet and loving spirits as appeared in the countenance and deportment of this poor man and his wife. They were naturally inclined to few words; but the woman, frequently seating herself by her husband's side, would throw her arms around his neck, and shed floods of tears to mitigate the anguish which overwhelmed him." A hundred years and more have passed since this monstrous cruelty and disregard to human life was misnamed justice and law. And the bloodthirstiness and impatient methods of our criminal code have given place to mercy and fair dealing. But there are innumerable instances still, to remind us of the truth of the old words, that "the destruction of the poor is their poverty." It is only the other day that a benevolent man in Bromley was asked by a boy to visit his father and mother. Before he got to the house, the father had died, and was lying on his face on the floor. Four little children were also lying on the floor—thirteen, eleven, seven, and six years of age, and there was a baby of thirteen months. In the middle of the floor he saw a bundle, and was going to step on it to look at the father, when the boy cried out, "That's my mother!" She was the most deplorable object he had ever seen, and was

all but dead. There was neither fire, nor food, nor furniture in the house, and the morning was bitterly cold. The only possession of this wretched household, except the rags on their back, was an oil painting, without a frame, the portrait of the father when he was in good circumstances. One of the little girls was delirious, but even in her delirium revealed the quality of the life which lay so bruised by want and irremediable poverty, for she went on saying, "There is just one bit of bread: keep it for baby; just one bit of bread: keep it for baby."

The time will come, when, in the retrospect of the centuries, the question will be asked,—whether the century which allowed a poor man to be hanged for sixpence, or that which let a whole family go down to death for want of sixpence worth of food and fire, inflicted the deepest bruise on humanity.

Next to this bruise of neglect and want, the most tragic but one which I shall name, is the bruise of war. I do not think the Christian Church has yet realised, as it is her vocation to do, the horror, the wickedness, the Christlessness of the most of the wars which have been. I do not think she has ever fairly placed before her own conscience, and the conscience of the nation, the utter and horrible misery to nations, and especially to the

poorer classes in nations, which is wrought by war. The brave deeds which it evokes, the heroic men it brings into view, only hide from us the long trail of unutterable evils, physical, spiritual, social, industrial, which it leaves behind. And it crushes beautiful life beneath its tread, and bruises with cruel strokes all the life which remains.

This is what a newspaper correspondent saw after the fight at Mentana:

“Under a group of oaks, on the right of the road, not far from each other, were three still unburied corpses,—fair specimens of the enthusiasts led by Garibaldi to achieve the unity of Italy. The first was a robust, almost herculean, young peasant, who had evidently not feared exposing himself, for he was literally riddled with balls, through the head, face, and ample breast. The round, red holes were visible, but the placid expression of his features indicated no suffering, for his death must have been instantaneous. . . . The next victim was of a more delicate type. A fair young man, with long curling hair, and blue eyes, half open, with the same placid expression as the first. His shirt was open at the breast, which was perforated with balls; a striped flannel tunic, and a pair of fine linen drawers had been left on him by the plunderers; but his stockings and shoes were gone, and the whiteness,

and delicacy of his feet, showed that his life had not been one of labour. . . . The third corpse was that of a fine lad of seventeen. He looked like a young artisan, and was completely dressed, with the exception of his shoes ; his clothes being saturated with blood, from a large wound on his right side, over which his left hand had closed in death. Who knows to what families they belonged, or what mothers' hearts were yearning over them, as they lay with faces upturned in death to the azure sky."

A human life is nothing in this game. And the life of a private is less than nothing.

"All quiet along the Potomac, they say,
Except, now and then, a stray picket
Is shot, as he walks on his beat to and fro,
By a rifleman hid in the thicket.

'Tis nothing—a private or two now and then
Will not count in the tale of the battle ;—
Not an officer shot ! Only one of the men
Breathing out all alone the death rattle !"

The poor picket has feelings, home memories, prayers to God for dear ones far away, tender ties binding him to wife and child. War makes no account of these. He paces from point to point in his beat, a moment comes when there is the flash of a rifle in the bush, the sharp sound of the shot, and the death agony.

“ All quiet along the Potomac to-night
No sound, except the rush of the river :
But the dew falls unseen on the face of the dead ;—
The picket’s off duty for ever.”

I remember the thrill of horror which went through the land when the numbers who had been killed in the Crimean war were told out. 400,000 of all nations ! Fancy, guns playing on Liverpool or Glasgow, till four-fifths of its inhabitants were killed. Well, I make no count of these. They have gone from the battle. They are “ off duty for ever.” But as many more at least are wounded, think of these. And think also of the 400,000 homes to which the tidings of these deaths must have reached, and on which a bruise would be inflicted for ever !

This is the cruelty of war, that it reaches out long arms and crushes young hearts who are no way involved in its quarrels, and buries homes in ruin far from the battle fields, and plants seeds of early death in ten thousand sorrowing women.

And even with this, its cruelty has not reached its limits.

From far across the Atlantic, from the banks of the Potomac or the Mississippi, it smites the innocent work-folk of Lancashire and Clyde, and bruises them in their industry, their home, their food, their love, their life,—in everything but their self-respect.

And not even then is the cruelty at an end. After all the men whose passions, or ambitions, or prejudices have led to a war, have been gathered into the grave, it will lift its ghastly arm out of the grave and go on smiting and crushing the hearts and lives of the unconsenting generations which follow. It is the bruises of old wars between races which come to light in such outbreaks as Fenianism. And Fenian trials, and executions, and sympathies, are but the spent forces and last blows of battles which ought never to have been fought.

I said that war was the most tragic but one of the bruises I meant to name. I come to that one now.

It is the dismal, altogether tragic, bruise of drunkenness. Almost every other bruise we could name has some alleviating element, some margin on which good can build. Even war is sometimes the overthrow of tyranny; the clearing of the air of life from error and crime. But there is no alleviating element in drunkenness; no margin of good. It is altogether evil. It is evil continually. It is loss of character, of reason, of domestic peace, to those who are smitten by it. It means crime, debasement, beggary, for society. And murder, in nine cases out of ten, is only drunkenness emphasised. What

can be said, that will give an adequate impression of the terrible depth and extent of this bruise? Its mark is on the poor drunkard himself, and on every human being related to him. It puts its death mark on body and soul, and business, and friendship, and natural affection, and self-respect, and character, and the very vision of God.

Just listen to two brief stories, two out of thousands which might be told.

Two friends had been separated for twenty years. The one in this country, the other in Canada, had cherished the friendship, written regularly, and kept up the early love. And both had prospered and risen to honour in their respective towns. The colonist, full of honour, returned to his native land to see his friend, and with him his eldest son. The English friend threw open his home to them. And his only child devoted herself to pour out kindness on her father's friend. Was it wonderful that love sprang up between the children of these two? Or that their love ended in marriage? Every way, and to all the world, it seemed a suitable match. But, alas! for the young lady. She was hardly a month married when she discovered that her young husband was a hopeless drunkard. I say nothing of the silence as to this fact on the part of the father. He might hope that this pure and new affection

would root out the old vice. I ask you only to consider how those two circles came in that moment to be filled with bruised hearts. A separation was inevitable. And that young lady had to carry her bruise with her to the grave ; all the memories of her first love, all the joys of her life, all the visions of her home bruised. And the bruise fell no less on the hearts of the two fathers, and on their friendship, and made them old before their time.

The other is a story of humble life. A watchman, in a dock not far from my home, stole out one night and went with some companions to a public-house. He came back unable to take care of himself. Clambering into the ship he should have been watching, he lost his hold, and slipped down into the water. Nobody was near to help. Black night, black depth of water, black absence of human aid ! A splash in the mass of death, a movement or two of convulsive stupor, and what has happened ? A life-long bruise has fallen on a family of seven souls, all unconscious of the terrible stroke, all quietly sleeping till the morning. The bruise of widowhood is on one ; the bruise of orphanhood is on six ; and on all the bruise of pauperism. The whole aspect of life has changed for those seven. In a moment they have been

plunged into the abysses where life is one continual experience of bruises, where beggary, the work-house, the soup-kitchen, and the devil's outlets from these, are to be found.

Ah! it is a still sadder bruise, when, by the influence of drink, the shadow of the gallows falls on such a home. What is that shriek which sometimes rings through a criminal court? It is the mortal anguish of some wife or daughter who has just heard the sentence of death pronounced on one dear to her, who, in the madness of a drunken fury, took the life of a fellow-being.

Consider the surroundings of children, who, like the six I have referred to, and like thousands besides in this country, have been plunged by the death or crime of drunken parents into the lowest depths of society. To know the bruise of drunkenness it must be followed into these abysses. It is not houses these children descend to. It is dens, where the air is poisoned, where the walls are foul with vermin, where bed-clothes are unknown, where human decency is impossible, where foul words and fouler deeds are as common as courtesies on an upper level; where no restraint is placed on the passions, the cruelties, the rudeness, the exactions, which heartless and debased people indulge in; where human nature has been brutalised, and the

very fashion of the human countenance is being sodden out of the human form. Typhus is there to bruise, and cholera ; and, worse than typhus or cholera, crime and foul living. The very atmosphere bruises. The morals bruise. The wickedness, the poverty, the natural suffering, all inflict their bruise.

I shall give one little glimpse of the kind of world into which drunkenness sends human beings to live. The Bridgegate of Glasgow in former days was the fashionable part of the city. The Guildry Hall was there. The houses of the principal citizens, with gardens sweeping down to the Clyde, were also there. In one of these old houses, up whose ample stairs floated in old times the ladies of the drawing-room, lived some twenty years ago, from twelve to fifteen families of the poorest people in the city. In one little room there is a poor mother who has given birth to her fifth child. There is not a bed in the room, nor a blanket, nor a table, nor a chair, nor a loaf, nor a fire, nor a father, nor a friend. There are only the four starved and hungry children and their sick mother and the new-born infant. Look at that scene ; I have not coloured it in the least. In a few days the poor mother would be out, and her very first errand would be to the dram-shop. And

her drunken husband would come and go ; and her children would see nothing but sin. If they went into the lobby of the old mansion, every room might exhibit a similar scene. From attic to cellar it was one festering sore of social wretchedness. The language of the men was blasphemy, of the women impurity. The industry of two-thirds of them was thieving, of the other third what I will not put a name upon here.

It is into a world like that, down amid shadows like these, that God's great gift of childhood is, in consequence of drunkenness, received.

"The gods the blinded nations fear" are not so hideous as the gods worshipped in these dens. The ignorance, the debasement, the brutality, amid which the lowest savages on the globe are living, cannot be deeper or more filled with moral death than that world of woe and sin, of squalor and crime, in which the children of drunkards, in such levels as I have been exploring, are cradled and brought up.

What aggravates the evil is that every bruised life is also, and partly in consequence of being bruised, a chained life. Insufficient employment and want, foul air and disease, pauperism and crime, make prisoners of those they bruise. The bruise descends on brain or limb, on heart or will,

on health or home, but in every case the unhappy sufferer is bereaved of liberty.

There is a touching passage in Mungo Park's travels:—"No sooner had I shut my eyes than fancy would convey me to the streams and rivers of my native land. There, as I wandered along the verdant bank, I surveyed the clear stream with transport, and hastened to swallow the delightful draught; but alas! disappointment awakened me, and I found myself a lonely captive perishing of thirst amid the wilds of Africa."

The crushed lives of society have not the solace of the dreams which, while they lasted, cheered the African traveller. Few of them have a happier past to look back to. But they resemble him in the continual disappointments they have to suffer, and in the sense of the irreversibleness of their lot.

What is the position of a child born into a family of thieves? As really as if he were bound by chains and shut in by prison walls is he thrall to the life and fortunes of his wretched parents. Look at the same child after society has put its broad-arrow mark on his life—on the day, for example, when he is liberated from prison for the first time. Is he now free? Is the world before him where to choose? Having tasted the bitterness of the way of transgression, can he now, if so disposed, begin

a new career, strike into a new path, and break away from his old belongings? Alas! he has come forth into a world which has made itself mad against such as he. Who will take a poor boy into his office who has come out of prison? Who so charitable as even to give him half-a-crown to keep him away from his old beat? The poor child is walled out from sympathy, help, and chance of amendment; and walled in by the grim necessities of life to re-enter his old tracks again. Take one illustration more. Take one who may be sister to such a boy—but who, as often as otherwise, is the fallen child of worthy parents in the country. The want of clothing which she can call her own—so small a thing comparatively as that—is often the chain which binds her to a life of which she is long ago tired. There was nothing in all negro slavery more atrocious than the methods by which girls in her condition are terrified by their want of clothing into continuance in a life of shame. When they enter the infamous dens which traffic in their shame, they are supplied with dresses which they are never allowed to look upon as their own, and with trinkets which they are given to understand are stolen property; and by a hundred ugly phrases they are made to feel that escape with these clothes on their backs, and trinkets about

their persons, would not only be theft from their taskmasters, but in some hidden way complicity in robberies which have been committed by others. Prisoners have escaped from Bastilles, but from bondage like this there seems to be almost no possibility of escape. What is required, therefore, in true Christian work is "*to set at liberty* them that are bruised."

* * * * *

When I place before my mind this bondage, those wounds, those innumerable multitudes of bruised lives, that boundless variety of bruises—when I ask myself, What is the help which the Christian preacher can render? what is the help which by preaching alone he can render?—I will confess that I become painfully sensible to how great an extent any assertion and vindication of such help must be an appeal to faith.

The hints I am about to throw out (and, in relation to this part of the preacher's mission, they can be no more than hints) have only this merit: that they are drawn either directly from the Bible, or from the experiences of those who have followed Bible light. I throw them out as seed, not knowing whether it is spring-time yet for the sowing of such seed, not knowing even whether there are hearts to receive it, but following out the appointed task

of sowing beside all waters. May the wise and all-contriving Lord open furrows and fit soil to receive it!

I.

No preacher is sent into this work alone. He goes accompanied by an innumerable host of co-workers. It is no longer the time when a single prophet goes forth to liberate doomed cities. There are seven thousand besides Elijah. In every village, in every district, in almost every street of the great towns, the prophets are lifting up their voice. The old prophecy has been fulfilled, and many are running to and fro, and knowledge is increased.

When the shower is descending at one point, on the Lord's-day, a thousand fields elsewhere are being refreshed by similar showers.

II.

The work of all the preachers of one generation is part of a continuous and unceasing labour. As it is not to be judged by solitary instances, so it is not to be judged by its fruits in any one period. In this work, one soweth and another reapeth. All that an entire generation may be able to do is to advance the lines of evidence, or persuasion, by—so to speak—an inch or two. It is like the building of the middle age cathedrals, which, from the

founding to the laying of the copestone, saw out centuries and many generations of men. Gibbon, and men like him, outside of the Christian spirit, mock the long toil of the discussions on the Trinity in the early centuries. But there is as long toil in the vindication and development of every great principle which is to influence the faith and conduct of the race. The counsel looks far beyond the limits of a single life which runs, "Be not weary in well-doing."

III.

The particular bruise before whose presence God may place us, and which it may be our chief life-task to deal with, may be—almost certainly is—the result of long periods of ignorance, of vice, or of misgovernment. A score of deeply-rooted prejudices and vicious customs and inhuman neglects, may have led to this particular evil. And its present hideousness may be the fruit of generations of growth. Slavery was never the growth of a single age. Neither is war, nor drunkenness, nor the oppression of one class by another in the State, nor the domination of one sect over another in the Church, nor any other social vice or wrong that could be named. It took hundreds of years to abolish the slavery which Paul found in the Roman

world when he went forth on his sublime mission. And no preacher should forget, that in respect of most bruises that can be named, he can only deal a life-stroke at the evil, and pass on. Only one generation can be in at the death.

The place of the preacher is neither on the heights where just laws are made, nor in the councils where great reforms are determined. But he has a place higher than either of these, and functions anterior to those of statesmen and reformers. His nobler field, in respect of social evils, is the boundless range of public opinion. He is the steward of the truth which creates that opinion and contains the possibilities of the future. And there never can be a moment in his history in which he may not justly say, "The law-givers and the political councils follow the trail of the light which is in Christ's Gospel." First, the truth—proclaimed in obscurity, proclaimed for long unheard, proclaimed from generation to generation; then, the awakening of individual conscience; then, the stir of the social conscience; then, loud alarms, and the loud protests of a roused people; then, the public agitation, the newspaper articles, the political parties, the demands; at last, the law." It was only a few in all England, perhaps, who reflected, when the Irish Church Bill passed into law, that the principle

embodied in it had been proclaimed in the pulpits of English Puritans and Scotch Seceders many generations before.

IV.

As God's liberator of the bruised, it will belong to the Christian preacher to sow the principles which *prevent* the growth of bruises. He assails false beliefs and vicious customs which lead to bruises. He gives himself not only to the rescue of the bruised ; but also to the prevention of bruises.

Our other methods are beneficent angels visiting the sufferers, or plunging into the floods at midnight to rescue the wanderers who have missed their footing and fallen in. But this method is the morning sunlight, pointing out both floods and highways, and guiding the simple in the right way.

It is the glory of Christian preaching that it reaches out its hands to both methods. Prevention is in the right hand ; in the left, are compassion and rescue. Whatever made be said of the success or unsuccess likely to attend the visiting and reclaiming methods, there can be but one opinion as to the reality of the success which awaits the other.

In this department of the preacher's work, his

place is far up among the sources of social suffering. Whatever is a source of sin and misery to human beings he is bound to attack. The light of the testimony he has been appointed to declare should fall down on everything "that defileth, or worketh abomination, or worketh a lie." If there be a cross in taking up a particular subject, he must take up the cross. He is in the pulpit to declare "the whole counsel" of God; and the whole counsel of God includes testimony against everything that offends, or puts a stumbling-block in a brother's way.

It will sometimes happen, therefore, that politics will demand a place in preaching. A humane law is a fountain of healing; a bad law a fountain of misery. The preacher is not free to leave untouched that region of social life which law-making occupies. He is bound to bring the whole work of dealing with the laws into the region of conscience and under the light of Christ's authority. He is bound to teach, that men are accountable for the politics they hold; and, when occasion demands it, to confront an enacted unrighteousness with the righteousness of the law of Christ.

Take the one evil of war. Can anybody doubt that it is in the power of the dominant people throughout the world to determine, or withhold,

sufferings and crimes for millions of human beings for the next twenty years? Can it be right, in the face of this grave fact, for the teachers of Christian truth to be silent in their place? Is not every preacher bound to proclaim it as the intention of his Master, and one of the objects of His mission, that there might be, not war, but peace on the earth, and to denounce the war spirit, war fashions, war ambitions, and war cruelties, whenever he has opportunity?

A hundred other things which have a very secular aspect will sometimes demand to be handled. It is simply impossible to speak wisely about drunkenness—to take another example—without glancing back upon its sources, and round upon its supports.

If the Christian Church is Christ's servant to visit widows and fatherless children, she is not less His servant to liberate mothers and children from the doom of avoidable widowhood and orphanhood when she can. By drying up the sources of drunkenness, she would fulfil this part of her task. It can never, therefore, be the duty of her teachers to pass these sources by. The ignorance, the poverty, the ill-health which lead to this vice; the trade which fosters it; the places of amusement which increase it; the habits of society which

countenance it : all these things are in the way of the preacher, to be denounced and smitten.

V.

It is the preacher's vocation to keep the members of his congregation acquainted with the extent of the evil, to set them to study the causes and to prevent what may be prevented, to mitigate what can only be mitigated, and to pity what can neither be prevented nor mitigated.

A true preacher brings the heart of Christ in among the bruised. He is the very first to realize and proclaim the natural bonds of humanity which Christ has sprinkled with His blood.

Indifference to human suffering, or careless unconcern about it, or Cain-like asking, "Am I my brother's keeper?" should be impossible where a Christian pulpit is—should be a question for no Christian heart. The Church stands and lives on the height of the great fact, that as Christ gave His life for us, His people are to give their lives (their lives, observe!) for the brethren. And these bruised ones, high and low, are our brethren.

It belongs to Christ's preachers to enforce those broad Christian principles, which carry in their perfect application the drying up of every evil between man and man. These two for instance :—

“Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters. Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers ; but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart ; with good-will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.”—

A full education in this precept would dry up more than a half of all those occurrences which we call accident. The pointsman on the railway, the railway guard, the pilot taking out a ship, the overman in a mine, the miner himself, would realize the eye of Christ above them, and every thing would be done gravely and securely and well, as if done to Him.

Or this : “Do to another what you would have another do to you.”—

Would the clothier keep his ten or twenty workmen in a cellar where there is not air enough for one—would that milliner keep her thirty or forty girls till midnight—would that manufacturer keep his workmen at processes which mean death at forty—would that diabolical trades union secretary send out his assassins to ratten men’s lives away—would that Poor Law Board neglect the sick among their inmates—if they were under the influence of this one Christian principle ? It is impossible.

The roots of this principle are in the Cross.

Preachers are intended to cover the whole earth with its beneficent shade. It is practicable at the lowest and highest levels of life. It embraces in its natural sweep all the acts, words, and feelings of human intercourse. I have sometimes allowed my mind to fill out the picture of a world fashioned by the practice of this rule. It would be a world without wrong doing. No child would be disobedient, no parent harsh, no home unhappy except by bereavement. Servants would be faithful, masters just. There would be neither backbiters nor malicious persons. Evil-speaking in all its forms would cease. It would be a world of honourable, candid, and upright beings. No thief or resetter of stolen goods would exist in it. Fraud, and undermining of neighbours, and extravagance, and living for appearance, would be unknown. No murderer could arise in such a world. You would search in vain for lash and scaffold. Drunkards and profligates would have disappeared. Gamblers, horse-racers, fighters of dogs, and all their vile fraternity, would be for ever banished. There would be neither victim nor villain, neither slave nor tyrant, neither oppressor nor oppressed, neither hypocrite nor bigot. War would be unknown. Misunderstandings between nations would be submitted to friendly arbitration.

There would be no persecution for religious opinions,—no exclusion of men from social position on account of their Church. There would be neither hopeless poverty, nor excessive wealth. In a most real sense, the children of men would have all things in common. And at least four-fifths of all the diseases which afflict the human race would be banished.

Under the simple operation of this principle, there would be peace, love, righteousness, and well-being on the earth ; and it would be truth to say of it, what is said of the reign of Him whose law it is :—

“The just shall flourish in His days,
And prosper in His reign ;
He shall, while doth His morn endure,
Abundant peace maintain.”

VI.

But while the preacher, in this wide and far-reaching purpose of liberating the bruised by prevention—by sowing seeds of change for the better—has to sweep a large field and proclaim principles which as yet there may be few to hear, his daily labours, even with this purpose in view, must always lie in nearer and humbler spheres.

He has to speak to many, both men and women, who would fain be doing something to advance the

kingdom of Christ, who have neither the health nor the time for the rougher tasks. I know nothing in his work so fitted to stir the soul as the thought, that in preaching the gospel in its simpler applications, a preacher may be the means of sinking a well of principle in some heart around which a home is being built, and, in this way, of opening up a stream of influence which may affect hundreds and thousands yet unborn. This is an old and tried way, a way open to all, a way near to all. And after all, it is the grand pathway by which purity, or righteousness, or any wholesome Christian influence, must pass into national life.

If the gospel is to conquer society, it must do so, Lacordaire finely said, "not by making war upon society, but by taking, as Themistocles did at the court of Persia, a seat at its very hearthstone, and thence radiating over the whole of life."

Let any one look back over the social habits of our country for the last two hundred years. In every direction improvement is manifest. There is less brutality, less cruelty. Manners are touched with a greater refinement. Profligacy, bad though it still is, is not the open and brazenfaced evil which it once was. Domestic life is purer. The sentiment in favour of domestic purity is deeper. The whole tone and feeling of society is healthier.

I maintain that this progress, be it great or small, is due to the action of the gospel on the home life of the country. By the Christianity of the home, society has been Christianised.

No true-hearted preacher can think of what has been done already for society, by the elevation of home life, without desiring to work in this direction more earnestly than ever. He will make continual appeals to the hearts of the fathers and mothers before him. He will say to them, with all the fervour of which he is capable, "Leaven your own home circle with Christian feeling, sentiment, and life. Bring in the queenly graces of pity, tenderness, and purity, and the kingly qualities of temperance, righteousness, and courage. Train up your boys and girls to be wells of moral health in society. Above everything else, above position, settlement in life, fortune, seek for them Christ and His righteousness. All noble abstinence, all noble purity, shall be added from above. When they go forth from your side to take up positions for themselves in society, they will carry with them a noble influence wherever they go. Your sons will add new centres of true manhood, and chaste and upright living; your daughters, womanly virtue and Christian grace to society. Impure living, selfish pleasures, cruel exactions from the poor and

the weak, affronted by the neighbourhood of so much virtue, shall hide their heads. And from under the threshold of their homes, like a new river of life,—love, mercy, and temperance shall flow forth to heal the bruises of the land.”

VII.

Let no preacher of Christ's Word, working at this labour of love, fail of patience, and cry, “The fruit delayeth its coming.” It is the destiny of faith to overturn mountains. And there is nothing which our eyes see, in all the heaped-up mountain of things which bruise humanity, which shall not one day be overcome and broken and cast into the sea.

That day may be far. In the conflict, we may have long marches and hot suns to encounter. And when victorious at one point, we may see our enemy breaking out with recovered strength at another. But the day of victory advances none the less, and the bruised children of God shall be set at liberty.

And do not forget, in whatever direction our task may call us, and whatever part of the battle we may have to front, that behind all the varieties of bruised life we see, the enemy is still, as ever, the same persistent, implacable foe who, from the

hour when he bruised the peace of the first pair in Eden, has been the bruiser of the heel of the whole human race ; and that he is invincible to every fighter except him who goes into the conflict in the strength of the great hope, that, through our oneness with Christ, the very heel of that human race shall one day bruise his head !

VII.

THE PREACHER AS A REGENERATOR.— THE RENEWAL OF SOCIAL LIFE.

“To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.”

WE come here to that task, in the preacher's mission to society, which is the pathway to the fulfilment of all the rest.

The poor are to hear glad tidings, the broken-hearted are to be healed, the captive delivered from his captivity, the blind made to see, and the bruised to be set free: and the grand main passage to all these happy effects lies in the preaching of the acceptable year.

At once these questions rise to our lips; What is this year on the preaching of which so many blessings depend? What is it to preach this year? And by what Divine virtue is the preaching of this year effective in healing the bruises and sorrows of men?

It is the year of jubilee. No part of Christ's sermon at Nazareth would carry with it such an astounding claim on the faith of His hearers as that in which He declared that He was come for

the fulfilment of these last words. It is not certain that the jubilee was ever kept. But this did not interfere with the existence of the idea of it, either as belief or hope, in the Jewish mind. Like the history of Arthur and his round table among ourselves, the ideal was all the more vivid, perhaps, that it could not be contrasted with broken fulfilment. The people were familiar with the beautiful words, in Leviticus, in which it was proclaimed as law. Isaiah and other prophets had given forth pictures of it, as a glory of the future. These scriptures had been chanted in their hearing on the holidays of the nation, and read and expounded in the meetings of their synagogues. The gladsome time lay behind them as law, lay before them as the Golden Year. And, perhaps, no single hearer of the Lord's, at Nazareth, was without an inner vision, more or less accordant with Scripture, of what it was or ought to be.

Let us pause for a moment, then, before asking how the idea was fulfilled and transfigured in Christ, and try to transfer that vision to our own minds. Poets and painters have described it for us, until now there is hardly any scene of the past more vividly pictured for thought than this, concerning which we yet do not know whether it ever actually took place. Seven times seven years, we

shall suppose, have revolved. And now it is the eve of the blessed time. The heritage which the poor man had to sell because of his poverty, will come back to him. The liberty which the poor man had to part with on the same account, will be restored. God steps down among these bargains of the every-day world to assert the claims of His covenant with the people. The land returns to Him. The people are asserted to be His. And the restoration of heritage and liberty proceed direct from Him. Could people who had had to part with their old homes and the fields, in which they had played as children, be unexcited as the time of restitution drew near? Could the bond-servants fail to count the days and hours until they were free?—The last night of exclusion and bondage has come. To-morrow's sun will rise on a new world, a new time. It is the great day of expiation for the sins of the people. The sins of the nation are confessed on this day by the High-priest in the holy of holies. And forgiveness is proclaimed. And along with the forgiveness—but not in the temple only, in all the priests' cities throughout the land, and probably in every town and village in the land, men go forth blowing the curved horns and announcing the new time. "Blessed is the people that know the joyful

sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance. In Thy name shall they rejoice all the day." This blessedness descends on all the land. In God's name, the slave walks forth free, and the old homes come back, and gladness and feasting take possession of the people. The poverty of the poor man is mitigated. The grasp of the creditors is loosened. Those who have defrauded their neighbours' property have to disgorge. Those who have seized the persons of the weak have to surrender their spoil. Rich and poor shall be equal in God's sight. By the institution of this year, He asserts that He is no respecter of persons. And by the same institution He typifies the still grander year of the Messiah.

The startling word, therefore, which the Lord must have uttered when He came to this part of His sermon was, not merely that the year of jubilee was come, but that He was Himself—preaching to His kinsfolk and neighbours there,—the realization of Isaiah's words. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because I am anointed to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." "*This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.*"

But there are so many visions of happy times for the world, which resemble this on the outside and have no inner likeness; so many merely human

ideas which stop short just where the needed help, the Divine miracle-working, should come in,—that it seems to me as if our nearest way to the secret of the power which is in the preaching of it, and to all the information we want concerning the year itself, will lie through a brief statement of—What is *not* the preaching of this year.

I will begin by saying, that he is on the wrong tack for this work who spends his strength on such themes as the shortness of life, the uncertainty of years, or the certainty of death. I say nothing against these as themes for the pulpit. In the wide range of pulpit-teaching there is ample room for them. What I do say is, that the preaching of these facts, that any amount of such preaching, or of earnestness in enforcing them, would not be preaching of the kind we have to do with here. A preacher may be in terrible earnest, and with good reason, speaking of such things. There may be pressing need in the circumstances of his congregation, or of the general Church, to say, "Time is short and death is near, and now is the accepted time." And with the weight of these facts on his message, he may seem to himself, and to those who hear him, to be fulfilling his vocation and proclaiming the year of the Lord. But it is not so. It is death he is preaching, not life. It is

wrath, not love, which is in his words. His words may be blessed: he may arrest those who hear him. Souls halting between two opinions, souls lingering at the gate, souls playing on the edge of the abyss, may be startled out of their security and made to flee from the wrath to come. All this! And yet the preaching which has accomplished those results shall be found to have in it not one characteristic of the notes of joy, which the horn-blowers of the jubilee were commanded to sound through the land.

I assert next, that neither is that the preaching of the acceptable year which seems the furthest removed from the themes I have been referring to, and is, in substance, the announcement of "a good time coming." Inside and outside of the sphere which the Christian preacher occupies, voices will be found proclaiming such a time. We are so much the children of hope, our life is so continuously spent under the conviction that "man never is, but to be blessed," that in any age, there will be sanguine people for whom this hope shall have immense attractions. But in our age, the incitements to yield to it are enormous. For seventy years now, Europe has been in a state of revolution—sometimes violent, sometimes peaceful, and any moment of all those years, might have

seemed the gateway into a future of unimagined possibilities of good. Ever, we seem to be standing on the threshold of new glories: the happy time for which men have waited so long, is at hand, ready to burst upon our view in splendour. Men only require to be "up and doing," and the dawn will be in the sky. The great thinkers have come, and are still coming. It is morning in the brains and books of the advanced souls already. If only the workers would now bestir, the clouds would break up, and the happy golden age would be upon the earth.

But there is not any real help for man—or for any solitary child of man—in dreams like these. The chains do not fall from the slave at the sound of such pleasant songs. The "good time coming" brings no joy to the sufferer on the sick bed, or in the prison, or in the depth of a black despair. The prophets who announce it, look beyond the actual sufferers at their side, and speak for an unborn race. If I am weak, or poor, or sick, or naked, I am nothing to their age. Their age can be nothing to me. It is the mirage of the desert offered to my thirsting soul. If I rush forward, it is only to find I have been deluded and mocked. In the end, I shall have to deplore that that age has brought no jubilee to me.

I will mention yet another form of teaching which comes short of preaching the acceptable year. Men might content themselves with pointing out the enlargement of human thought which Christianity has wrought. Going back to the ages which preceded the Christian era, they might show, and justly show, how immensely the world has benefited by the Christian faith. And they might say, and there are teachers who content themselves with saying, "The Christian era is the time of the greatest reach of the human mind. Before it were the ages of human childhood and youth. Now is the time of manhood and maturity—the acceptable, best time."

But I think it is easy to show, by comparing the year of which Christ is the fulfilment, with one of the most remarkable times in human history, how much more than those teachers set forth must be contained in the preaching of the acceptable year. If we go back to the beginning of the fifteenth century, and consider the life which people were leading in Europe then, we shall find that, even for the best instructed, it was a life of isolation and narrowness. From that date onwards, however, for two hundred years, occurred those memorable events which gave new worlds, in time and space and thought, to man. The restoration of learning

and the invention of printing opened up the past, and widened the scope of human vision until it embraced the beginning of Greece and Rome. The discoveries of Columbus added a new continent to the human dwelling-place. Luther reopened the gates of the holy-of-holies to the human soul. And Galileo revealed a new universe among the stars.

Feats and discoveries like these change the world for man, and widen the ranges of his life. The poorest child born in a European home, became heir to a greater heritage than the kings of former times had known. Now, like those two centuries among the centuries, the Christian era among the eras has been a time of enlargement for the mind and life of man. By Christ's own life alone it has widened the reaches of all human life thereafter. Those miracles of mercy and healing, those agonies of prayer on the lonely mountains, under the stars, those wise far-reaching words, that victory over the grave, gave new heavens and a new earth to men, and revealed a life which even on this earth had been Divine. But the Christian era is far more to men than a time of mental enlargement. Not only is a new inheritance revealed to men, but men are made meet for that inheritance. Christ is not only the Revealer of

new worlds ; He is also the Well-spring of a life which enables those who receive it to reach these worlds.

To preach the acceptable year, therefore, must be something more than merely to announce the dawn of a new era or the enlargement of man's dwelling-place. It is to proclaim a time which shall be ever present, ever new, and ever full of Christ's presence and power and life ; a time in which men, not only shall see heaven in the life of Christ, but realise something of that heaven for their own ; a time of release and restitution for the children of sorrow, in which, by the very hands of the living and present Saviour, the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the bond and the bruised shall be set free, and outcasts and lost souls shall be welcomed back to the Divine favour.

And this is actually the force of our Lord's assertion : " This day this scripture is fulfilled in your ears." He virtually asserts His Divine consecration for the announcement of this very time. And it is not only, " I have been anointed to preach it ; it is also, " I am myself the proclamation of it, the beginning and permanent source of it, for all the years which are to be." It is as if He had said, and probably He did say, " I bring this glad time to the earth. I am the Lord of the time and

of all the boons which it carries ; and wherever and whenever human souls shall receive Me into their hearts, the acceptable year shall have dawned, and My power shall be present to heal all the wounds of life."

It is beside this Form the man must take his stand who would preach the acceptable year. And fully to realise all that his preaching of it should be, he should place before his soul what the sun is to the earth. For the sun is not more exclusively the fountain of life and healing to that, than Christ is to the lives of men who dwell upon its surface.

Chilled to the heart, and bound with frost, and dark with winter shadows, lies the earth at the beginning of the year. But already, and little by little, and as if it heard in its deep recesses the steps of its approaching Lord, it puts forth little gleams of life. The ice melts on the river—the chill passes from the soil—the shadows disappear. In the quiet mornings the snowdrop and the crocus send up their light. In the warm noon the little snatches of sound overhead and in the eaves tell that the time of the singing of birds is come. The fields begin to be astir. The green blades peer up through the old grass. The little lambs come from God. The trees put out their buds.

Birds sing among the branches. And spring goes past. And summer comes, with its heats and flowers. And then the harvest. And then the joys of the harvest-home. And it is one power, one influence, one force of light and heat, which makes all these changes, and puts this crown on the year. And even so, Christ is the sun to whom the unsaved world must be indebted for its year of fruit. Harder than the bands of frost, darker than the shadows of winter, are the bands and shadows of sin on human life. But He rises amid the darkness. In the Word, in the quickening of the Holy Spirit, He sends forth, sends down and in, His light. And through Him is shed abroad on human hearts the warmth of the infinite love of God. The shadows flee away. The ice bands melt. The time of songs comes back. And saved souls everywhere bring forth fruit to God.

And therefore I say, the preaching which leaves out this fact, or fails to exhibit Christ as the one supreme Lord and source of the glories, fruits, and possibilities of this new time, is not, whatever other show of excellence it may possess, preaching of the acceptable year. And I will now add, that preaching which is not preaching of this year, is not preaching of Christ, and has no claim to the title of Christian preaching.

He ought to be at no loss to assent to this statement, who has the sermons and epistles of the first Christian preachers in his hand. The apostles went about proclaiming this very time, but it was ever by announcing Christ as its morning star and sun.

Hear Peter preaching it. Hear him as he stands up in the very dawn of the year, amid the influences it brought down from above, his own soul passing suddenly in upon new meanings in old prophecies, and his lips baptized with the fire of Pentecost. Now, it is a time of vision and dreams which he announces, a time of wonders in the heavens above and signs in the earth beneath. Then, it is a time of healing the lame, of waiting for still better times,—times of refreshing and restitution,—which Christ is to bring with Him when He returns. But under whatever form He portrays it, His testimony concerning it to those who hear Him is that it is a present time, a present good, a present life and opportunity for men. He sees the Spirit poured out from above, and men's souls quickening under the new influence ; and his gaze goes far up to the unseen throne, and he sees the living Saviour, the very Jesus who was crucified by wicked hands, "exalted to be a prince and a Saviour," and he declares that whosoever shall call on the name of that

Saviour shall find Him at his side, and in his heart, to save him ; and that He is a Saviour sent into this and every time, to turn every child of man from his iniquity.

Hear Paul preaching it. His spirit is standing in the presence of the Judge. He is realising the tremendous issues which flow from His words. Knowing the terror of God, he would persuade men. But what he would persuade them of, is the presence of this acceptable time. He has to go back to creation for symbols to describe it—he sees the old, bad, sin-filled world passing away, and a new world coming into its place. New creatures, new men, new thoughts, new views, a whole new life appears. But he too is speaking of a present good, a present opportunity of good. At the very moment he is speaking, the work is going on. God is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. The old chaos is passing away. The Spirit is brooding on the deep. And as God's ambassador, he beseeches men not to let slip the time, or to receive the grace of it in vain.

Hear John preaching it. Heaven has come down among men. The life of God has been lived in a human form. His own eyes have seen, his own hands have handled, this great reality. A manifestation of the highest life in the universe, a

present fellowship with that life, and with the very highest Possessor of it, a light whose origin is up in the character and life of God, but whose beams are the very gospel he proclaims. A Saviour whose blood cleanseth from all sin,—in that Saviour, a new light—a time in which that light shineth, in which darkness is passing away :—these are the quick, warm, vivid shapes, by which he proclaims to men the dawn of a new time, the advent and perpetual working of a Saviour who is even now in the unseen heaven, pouring out on men by His Spirit the fruits of His propitiation for the sins of the world.

These men felt, that the coming and death of Christ was the advent of a new age, an age in which a Divine endeavour was to go forth in the name of Christ, by the power of Christ, for the righting of the world's wrongs, and the healing of what is broken in its life. He, therefore, is a true preacher, and only he, who, travelling in the steps of these masters, comes forth to declare this message, that the year of the Son of Man is even now upon the earth. He has been at the open grave with the apostles, and realises the power of the resurrection in his own life. He has seen and felt the descent of the fiery influences of the Spirit. That very fire is in his own soul and on his tongue.

The soul dwells in the perennial light of that inner sanctuary, from which the great High-Priest of the race and our Elder Brother is pouring down blessings on men. And every day as it dawns, is, in his eyes, a day in which sins may be forgiven and suffering healed.

What now is the secret of this new time? What is there in it so peculiar, so good, so rich in the influences which affect men's lives, that the announcement of it should be made, as it is here, the very crown of all he can do, to heal or hinder the misery of the world.

I know no reply to this question, so suggestive, so simple, and yet complete, as one given by Mr. Thomas Erskine, nearly half a century ago, in a short preface to an edition of Gambold's poems. At that time the doctrine had begun to be maintained in this country that "man is the child of circumstances." Instead of simply denying this doctrine, as common-place thinkers were doing, Mr. Erskine said, "A man's circumstances have a great deal to do with the kind of life he leads. And if we only give a large enough interpretation to 'circumstances,' the doctrine is true." But he went on to show that our circumstances include more than the teachers of that doctrine were cognizant of, or willing to allow. Not his material

surroundings only, nor his social, but his spiritual as well. "Everything which comes in contact with a man's feeling or thought: everything which occasions joy or sorrow, hope or fear, love or hate." "Men are fathers, brothers, husbands, sons, friends, masters, servants, rulers, and subjects. They are connected by blood, by business, and by material interest, and there are many supposable circumstances in these relations." But above and under all these, the root and regulator of all the rest, stands the grand and permanent relation of life,—the relation between the Creator and creature. All other relations cease with our lives, or with the lives of others; this continues for ever. The circumstances of the others may be wrong, and partial wretchedness or hurt may ensue. "But if the circumstances of this highest relation be wrong, all is wrong. . . . The very root of the moral existence is dead."

And this is the very condition of men in the world. This is the deep, hidden-working influence which poisons man's life, and sends up the sorrows and crimes which cast such shadows over society. Because men are wrong in this master-relation, they are all wrong, and the evil passes into every lower relation they fill. To put right this wrong, is, in the long run, to rectify everything

that is wrong in the world. Command the circumstances of this relation, and you command all the circumstances of life. Surround the spirit of a man with the light of the Divine countenance; make this light an abiding and continual circumstance in his life; remove from the guilty the dread of the Divine displeasure, and that fearful looking-for of judgment; bring into near and distinct vision the undisturbed, unfading, and increasing glories of eternity: do all this, and "then, even in the midst of the most overwhelming of this world's calamities, he is an enviable man." A deep, substantial peace flows through his being; behind and above all outward events he discerns the loving will of a Father. He has a refuge which the world sees not, and in the future, "the glorious morning of the eternal Sabbath."

Now this is the very soul and marrow of the gospel of the acceptable year. Christ is the advent of happier circumstances for this very relation. He is the assurance to those who have failed to meet its claims, that a time of forbearance and forgiveness has begun, that a full satisfaction has been rendered for all offences, that a full pardon has been procured, and that the gates of the house of God have been re-opened for penitent rebels and prodigals.

Here, in this permanent relation; here, at the root from which all other relations spring; here, where, if joy be diffused, it must circulate through the whole tree of human relations, and bring forth fruit on every branch; here, God has shed forth joy abundant, joy unutterable, and full of glory. "He has drawn aside the veil, and let in upon us the light of His own eternal blessedness. He has done more. He has said, *Come up hither*. He has changed our scene and our circumstances from earth to heaven. He has given us a place in the upper sanctuary. He has surrounded us with the privileges of His children. He has joined us to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, whose names fill the bright and happy rolls of heaven. Yea, He has united us to Himself."¹

I have just one fact to add, to fill out the whole statement we need, concerning the preaching of this year. But it is one of immense importance. The light of the blessed time can only shine through the people of Christ. When Christ says, "*Let your light shine*," it is the light of this year's joy He means. We are His representatives, His ambassadors. By us His mercy, His pity, His miracles are to be shown

¹ Gambold's Works: Collins, Glasgow, 1823. Preface.

forth. This is the day of the Spirit, the dispensation of the Spirit. But it is on His people the Spirit is poured out. We are the vessels, therefore, of this influence for the world. If we are not receivers, no Christian work can be done. If we are not givers-forth, the lost world beside us must perish.

It is in relation to this work and to this year, that our Lord uses the words I have already appealed to: "One soweth and another reapeth." We inherit the labours of those who have preceded us in proclaiming this year. What they achieved is our starting-point. And, I think, never before in this country's history had those who go forth to labour among the outcasts, such treasured-up capital to start with as we. The whole past, back to Wesley, to Knox, to Wickliffe, to Monk Augustine, is ours. And the improvement in feeling, in tone, in thought, in knowledge: it is all ours. We advance to the work furnished with the knowledge of the failures and successes of those who have been at it before. And we have to labour in it at a time when the scorn with which the poorer classes have been treated is breaking down; when they are being advanced into a place in the government of the country; when there is a cry on every side for the improvement of this new

demos or king, and when they themselves, lifted out of the unjust exclusion in which they have been kept, are sure to come more kindly under the softening influences of whatever love we may be able to shed upon their lives.

There is no work we are called to—certainly not this work—which, in this world can be done without tears. Opposition, disappointment, suffering of many kinds, accost the preacher who shall take up this burden. We, too, as our Master had, shall have to endure the contradiction of the very sufferers we go forth to help. And the old foe will shoot out his lip and say of us as also of our Lord: "*By Beelzebub they are casting out these devils.*" Why should we be surprised? The servant is not greater than his Lord. Let us take up that cross, and every other on our path. It is only the tears of the sower in the cold spring of the year. Summer is coming; and then harvest. And he who went forth weeping bearing his precious seed, will come again rejoicing, carrying his sheaves.

Adolphe Monod declared on his death-bed that if twelve Christian men would go forth now, as the apostles did, with the same faith, the same love, the same fulness of the Holy Ghost, they would convert the world.

I am certain that if twelve Christian preachers, competent for the work,—filled with the Spirit,—with grace and faith and love in their hearts,—and well seconded by the sympathy, prayers, and co-operation of their congregations, would proclaim in the ears of this generation, as Luther and his fellow-labourers proclaimed the doctrines of the Reformation, or as Wesley and his fellow-workers announced the existence and claims of the other world: “*That these very days in which we are living are days of the acceptable year; that Christ is here, beside us, in this very land, in every street of its cities, in every lane of its villages, and in all the paths of the lives we are leading, to bless us, to bless our country and the world; and that He is personally living, and ruling, and interceding for us in heaven;*”—the whole dark world of sin and suffering in this land would feel the presence of the Redeemer, would awake out of its long sleep, and begin to live, and have joy in righteousness and God.

CHRISTUS CONSOLATOR.

PART SECOND.

“ It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save
them that believe.”

“There is truth in the saying, that the sense of hearing is deeper in some respects than the sense of sight ; that a doctrine, or sentiment, delivered into the ear, reaches the roots of the being more swiftly, and diffuses itself among them more passionately and permanently than if it had been taken in by the eye from a book. There are effects in the way of intellectual instruction and discipline, and much more in the way of moral rousing and modification, which can be more readily and strongly produced by the living voice than by any other agency ; and especially when men are congregated for the purpose in assemblies, and magnetic currents and circuits of sympathy are established among them, till they are for the moment as one compound organism beating with a mighty life, which each of its atoms feel, and it is into a mass of emotions already seething, that the propositions are dropped. In a thousand ways over our country at the present day, I can still see a noble need for this method, if we had but the right men. I can see it on the small scale and on the large, among unlettered multitudes in town and country, and among our clearest and most aristocratic minds.”—*Professor Masson.*

I.

SOME RESULTS OF PREACHING.

"With His pierced hands, Christ has lifted empires off their hinges, turned the stream of centuries out of its channel, and He still governs the ages."—*Jean Paul Richter.*

IT was in the city-halls of Ephesus, Corinth, Rome, in places hallowed by no memories of past worship, by no consecrations to Divine service, where, after the early persecutions, the first assemblies of Christian worshippers were held, There were many things in those old buildings out of harmony with the purpose of those who met in them for Christian worship. The architecture, the ornamentation, the very furniture were pagan. Statues of the gods, and busts of the deified emperors ranged up on every side. The buildings were used for public business,—were, in fact, courts of law ; but, in the ordering of Providence, it was there, and not elsewhere, within walls in which nothing that was external had associations for the Christian life, that those first public and lawful assemblies of Christians met to hear the

word. They were still a people only emerging from obscurity. They were coming up out of clouds of obloquy and persecution, a new, untried power in society, to front a world lying in wickedness, and in the ear of that world to announce a Divine purpose of social regeneration.

Endeavour to form some idea of the world which preceded that time. It was still the Roman empire. The wide reach of that empire included Britain, the Rhine, the Danube, the Euphrates, and the northern seaboard of Africa. "The Mediterranean Sea had become a Roman lake." On the shores of this vast lake lived and worshipped nations tributary to Rome. At the beginning of the Christian era, with the solitary exception of the Jewish nation, the whole circle was ignorant of the revealed word, and grew up to idolatry. Countries, shores, mountains, woods and streams and cities were consecrated to false gods, and believed to be their dwelling-places. Every trade had its tutelary deity. Every event in life was under the care of a separate celestial power. Games and arts and battle-fields were, in the closest manner, interlaced with the popular mythology. Rich temples crowned the brows of rocks, and nestled in woody dells. Shrines, from which audible responses of the gods were alleged

to be given forth, were established at commanding points. Powerful priesthoods were leagued together to serve and support those resorts of devotion. Devoted worshippers brought the homage of their affections and their means, and laid them on the altars. As in all pagan nations, the temple and the state were bound together by law. Laws, armies, civil institutions stood like walls around the shrines. And all the currents of national existence—all the fears and hopes and habits and prejudices of the people—streamed out continuously in their defence.

When Christian worshippers met in the city-halls of the empire, nearly the whole was changed. The temples were razed ; the shrines were forsaken ; the deities had become the jest of crowds. The world had changed its faith, its principles, and its aims. Churches stood in the squares of imperial cities. The citizens were moved, often to madness, by their interest in Church affairs. Look at that Roman army going forth to battle *before* this change took place. Examine its banners, its arms, its watchwords : they are all pagan. Look at that same army *after* the change. It has exchanged its pagan banners for Christian ones. Where the images of Roman gods had been stamped upon their armour, you would now see

symbols of the Cross. The men go into a Christian church to be blessed before going out to battle : they return to it to pray when the battle is over. I do not suppose these soldiers had been converted. I do not assume them to have been other than rude fighting men. I am only pointing out the visible marks of a mighty change. But these marks could never have impressed themselves in this way, if the change itself had not previously taken place in the inner and hidden regions of the empire's life. Externally, things might only seem to be changed ; but at the heart of the empire was a real core of Christian life, moulding and re-shaping the souls of men, and bringing new thoughts, new feelings, and new ways into the life of man upon the earth.

This change, so vital and widespread, so full of seed for the future, was the result of Christian preaching.

A few preachers—men of simple hearts, undistinguished hitherto—had left their homes in Judea three centuries before, and gone forth, despised and persecuted, into the midst of all that idolatry and pagan life. They went forth in the power of “the testimony of Jesus.” They went direct from the grave of their Master. They stood up in the towns and countries they visited, and simply

testified of what they had heard and seen. They carried the strange tale to human ears, that a Divine Saviour had been in their company, had been crucified for the sins of the world, had been dead and buried, and was now risen, alive, and on the throne of heaven. They proclaimed the Gospel of the Resurrection to a dying world, to a world whose institutions were in the grasp of death, and whose hopes were limited to this earth. In their Master's name they offered eternal life to men, and an immortal blessedness beyond the grave. And power went forth in their preaching. And the heart of the world was changed ; and the fashion of the world's countenance was altered ; and paganism began to give place to Christianity ; and new hopes, new fears, new principles, new aims took possession of the human soul ; and humanity entered on a new career.

II.

A thousand years roll on. The Roman empire has buried its Cæsars and crowned its Popes. All Europe is under their sway. A domination more potent, more deeply-rooted than the old Romans ever knew, rested on the European mind,—a domination intense and terrible, grasping human life from its birth onwards, and retaining its grasp for

eternity itself. No man was free ; no nation was free. "Europe was a great whispering gallery," and every whisper found its way to the ear of the Papacy. Kings, armies, people went and came as it gave commandment ; and they went and came in darkness. The darkness which rested on the world at the coming of Christ had returned. Christianity as an universal influence was all but dead. The most horrid blasphemies usurped its place in the minds of men. The truth itself was confined to a few humble and unnoticed districts of the earth : but it was a crime to spread its light. Light was un-Catholic, un-Papal, un-Roman. The people were debased and blind. The ministers of religion were steeped in profligacy and vice. Men mumbled over some Bible names, but their mumbling was idolatry. Jesus was no longer acknowledged King. Dead saints and martyrs were enthroned in His stead. His cause was virtually dead.

Such was Europe at the close of the fifteenth century. Such was then the Christian faith. No cause was ever more completely lost among men than the cause of Christianity at that time. Before the next century had closed, the cause was regained ; and at the close of the century following, the darkness was broken up, the bondage

loosed, and the universal Pontiff a mere Roman king. Light rested on men's hearts and flashed from their faces in the intercourse of life. The nations drew new energy from the change, and started on a new career. Life, society, art, commerce received new principles, and were animated by new vitalities. Nobleness, humanity, holiness, freedom became once more possible and common.

The blasphemies were rent asunder. The light of truth began to shine. The Church cast out its dead, and awoke into new and increasing vigour. And men walked forth once more as seeing Him who is invisible. The early days of the Church came back. And even better days began to dawn. Jesus was Lord and King again.

The discovery of a Bible, the conversion of a Saxon monk, the Reformation,—these were the steps by which this revival travelled. But the instrument, the power which effected it, was the preaching of a living and re-discovered Saviour to men. It was the manifestation to the conscience of the world of long-buried truth concerning Him. The pulpit at Wittenberg became a centre of life. Other pulpits awoke to their high vocation. Crowds gathered around their preachers to hear of a way to heaven, opened up to them by God Himself, and as free as the air they breathed.

Everywhere rose the voice of the living testimony concerning Jesus ; everywhere was proclaimed the one great doctrine of that testimony, which the times required. And steadily and irresistibly the revival took root and grew. The great, manly Protestant era was inaugurated.

III.

Notwithstanding a thousand drawbacks and defects, the religious life of England is a great result. It cannot be all make-believe and surface work. Hypocrisy is not its own reward, whatever else is. There must be some force, some hidden cause, some true thing acting on the souls of even the most surface-people, to account for the widespread and unanimous adhesion which there is in this country to the external duties and observances of Christianity. People do not build churches and Sunday-schools, do not take an interest in missionary societies and subscribe to them, without some real impelling power, other than mere habit, or natural custom, or force of circumstance supplies. Something must be acting somewhere on society to account even for this fact, that one large portion of mankind leave their homes every Sunday to spend the day in public worship.

An explanation is still more necessary, when,

from the unfriendly view of the religious world, you come to consider it with candid and sympathetic minds. Only lift up your eyes and survey the spectacle which that world presents. Open your ears and listen to the rustling of its living growths. The breath of an unseen power is sweeping through every branch; the air is filled with tokens of that power's presence. At this point, it is the conversion of young souls to Christ; at that other, it is the building up of converted souls in Christian life, which you see. Can you doubt, that, at the heart of all that may seem superficial and imperfect, there is a hidden stream of real godliness flowing in the life of the Church? Is the Church itself, with its both hidden and manifested lives, with its convictions and hopes, with its energies and aims and sacrifices, an effect without a cause? Why should it continue? Why is it not submerged in the rush and roar of the industrial, political, and scientific revolutions of the world?

Honestly look at some of the simple facts in the Church's experience. With whatever deficiencies in the doing,—with whatever limitation in the amount,—sorrowing hearts are actually comforted by her instrumentality. Widows and orphans are cheered and sympathised with; children are trained up in the principles of the Christian life;

young men are warned and barred back from evil ways; young women are clad in the beauties of holiness; artisans are taught to look upon their daily toils as part of Christian service; business men are instructed in probity and fair dealing; individual life is put under the influence of the powers of the world to come, and social life is permeated by opinions which have been learned from Christ. Time would fail even to enumerate the facts which make up the whole of Christian life. But I may go on to ask, whether, in this country, enterprises conducted on high Christian principles are unknown? Is the nation never moved to its profoundest depths by considerations purely spiritual,—by ideas, for example, of human pity and love? Comes there not forth at times, as from a well deep down in the heart of the people, a gush of the sincerest Christian sympathy at the advent of some benevolent or religious cause? Is modern English life uninfluenced, in its aims and motives, by hope in a future existence? Is there no cleaving of human souls to God?—no linking of man to man by Christian ties? Was there ever less of the spirit which asks, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” or of the bitter scepticism which makes the struggle for human rights a butt for sneers? Do not Christian men protest, in the

interests of the weak, against tyranny of every form? Are there not in thousands of lives noble aspirations after truth, noble sacrifices for the poor? And over all the Christian Church, in this land, have we not honest, hearty human prayers, and strivings and tears and agonies for, what is believed to be, the cause of God among men? And what are these manifold effects upon the surface of Christian society—these manifestations and exhibitions of Christian thought, feeling, and activity—but the ever-present, ordinary results of Christ's truth upon the life of the Church? I see behind it all the natural action of the word of the Master upon the hearts of His servants. Under all the variety of outcome I perceive the steady rush and flow, in innumerable heart-channels and Church-channels, of the sustaining and quickening and developing power of "the testimony of Jesus" by the prophesying of the pulpit.

IV.

What good thing in the history of the last eighteen centuries—what event worthy of an abiding place in human memory—can be named which does not owe its greatness to the truth committed to the Christian preacher? If we take a full and discriminating survey of what we truly

know of those centuries, and include within our gaze only those things which have purified and heightened the life of man upon the earth, we shall find that they are all results, direct or indirect, of the gospel of Christ.

What indeed is Christian history at the core but simply the record of the triumphs of this gospel among men? The earth has been full of widespread activity from the days of the apostles until now ; but how comparatively little of it all is remembered ! One slender but ever-broadening pathway of light runs down through the centuries. The spirit of history tends more and more to follow that line, to put everything else to one side or the other, to bring everything else into relation with this, and to brood over this alone. This pathway of light is the history of Christian truth and life.

Christian history on one, and that its richest side, is a prophecy and world-wide celebration of the power of Christ and His word. It is not ultimately the rise and fall of nations, or the conflicts of races, which it proposes to set before us. It is the evolution, the coming forward into greater and intenser clearness of human needs,—and parallel to that, but moving on the highways of the Unseen,—the coming forward of a living Saviour, and the principles of that Saviour's life to supply

those needs,—the march, in short, of God towards His proper dwelling-place in the hearts and homes of the children of men, and His victories by the way.

Reflect on Christendom. Beyond all other influences, which a true history would have to name, it is the result of the preaching of the Cross. This made it what it is ; this built it up. Consider the character of those instincts and sentiments which are the life-blood of Christian civilization ; it was the gospel which breathed them into society. Look at the races which are foremost in the wave of progress, and hastening to fill the earth with their life and speech. It is mainly the gospel which has made them what they are. All great results, all noble and beautiful living, all beneficent progress, all holy enterprise in Christendom, must at last be traced to the influence of the gospel upon mankind.

“It is the honour of Christian civilization,” writes one who has profoundly studied the character of our modern civilization, “that it has carried repentance even into the souls of nations. England has repented of having offended Ireland ; Europe has repented of having practised slavery. Pagan antiquity knew nothing of these awakenings of the public conscience,—of these moral illuminations

which suddenly change the hearts of men, and ere long effect a corresponding change in the state of society. Tacitus could only deplore the decay of the ancient virtues of Rome, and Marcus Aurelius could only wrap himself sorrowfully up in the stoical isolation of the sage; there is nothing to show that these superior minds so much as suspected the great crimes of their social state, even in its best days, or aspired to reform them. The Christian world, from age to age, sees new truths and virtues appear on its horizon, which reveal to it at once its grandeur and its faults, and renew its youth by purifying it.”¹

I would not willingly overcolour this statement. I acknowledge that these results have not been increased to the extent they might have been. England, and Christendom itself, are very far from being what they ought to be. But by this very acknowledgment I am carried forward to another power in the gospel. What is it which enables us to attain a consciousness of these deficiencies, but just the greater light which resides in that gospel? Far ahead of the realized good, is the ideal good in the word. Wider than our development is the scope of the truth by which

¹ Guizot's *Memoirs of Sir R. Peel*, p. 312.

we have developed. We are finite ; it is infinite. Our attainments follow, but are never in advance of the word. No civilization can transcend it. It can never cease to be suggestive and promotive of higher being. And thus, for endless ages, our children and our children's children must find in it the power of developments yet to come.

The power of the gospel to produce such results is immortal. It resides in all its truths ; it flashes forth in all its light. Its energies to-day are as elastic as when Jesus lived. As the Apostles spoke it among the villages of Judea, so it may yet be spoken. As Paul proclaimed it on Mars' Hill, so it may yet be proclaimed. Luther's thunder is not dead, but sleepeth. Knox's courage is abroad amongst us still, but in other battles than that brave man fought. Wesley's spiritual force, Whitefield's tenderness, and Irving's prophetic insight, are all waiting the Master's bidding, and will revive when such work as theirs has to be done again.

II.

SECRETS OF FAILURE.

“In presenting religious truths to the mass of minds, the question is not, Whether such and such great principles, acknowledged to be momentous, are *sometimes* offered to the view of the people : but rather this, Whether they are so offered as that the several elements of religion are *seen in their true perspective*—the foremost, foremost ; the hindmost, hindmost ? Everything depends upon this perspective. . . . It means nothing to say, ‘Such and such important objects have been placed within the view of those we instruct.’ Upon which, among these objects, has the mind been concentrated ? All else is nearly as if it were not. . . . You may disregard, if you will, the due perspective of objects when you are coldly lecturing upon philosophy, but to fall into this error of position and proportion when the stirring motives of eternity, when the alternatives of heaven and hell, are quickening the most intense emotions, and stimulating the most vivid anxieties—to do so, in such instances, is the same thing as to teach, in a positive form, the blackest heresies.”—*Isaac Taylor.*

THE question may fairly be put, and is, at this moment, by the very best friends of preaching, very anxiously being put : Why, being the Divine institution which it is—why, having a message which is a Divine power for the salvation of the world—the results of preaching are not still greater than they are ?

The replies which have been given to this question tend, for the most part, to find the explanation in certain alleged deficiencies in the spiritual condition, the circumstances, the training, or the organization of the preaching power in the Church. Men anxious to increase this power, have come to the front, and cried, "Oh for a more earnest ministry! Oh for tongues of fire! And, oh for a more thorough training to the work!"

I cannot deny that these replies touch some possible deficiencies in this power of the Church. But I venture, nevertheless, to express the conviction, that the main source, at present—and indeed always—of whatever shortcoming there may be, is to be found, not in the tone of life, training, or circumstances of preachers; but in the broken and one-sided proclamations of the message, which God has given them to deliver to the world.

The message entrusted to the ministry, is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth!" But if, instead of the full round of that message, as it is expressed in the Bible, only fragments of it obtain a place in the minds of preachers, and different fragments in different minds; if they go forth on their Divine mission with mere sentences of their message, and possibly sometimes with a simultaneous utterance of

sentences which seem to contend with each other, the results of their preaching cannot be other than comparatively poor.

I do not forget, that preachers have the entire Bible in their hands. But the entire Bible may be in the hands, and only a portion of it in the sermon.

How entirely different are the expositions of Old Testament truth which we find in the sermons of our Lord, and in the comments and teaching of the Jewish scribes of His day. It will be admitted that the Lord brought out of the Old Testament, what was intended to be found there. But these scribes had spent their lives in its study, and had not found it. The Bible of the scribes was one thing : that of Jesus, another.

What these scribes found was so merely the husk of what they were intended to find,—it lay so wholly aside from the main purpose and drift of the book, and was made up so much of things indifferent,—that a transcript of their knowledge would have produced, and practically for themselves and their generation did produce, another Bible, one which knew not Jesus, and which Jesus could not acknowledge.

To the Jewish people it proved a very tragic circumstance, that their teachers had so entirely

misapprehended and misrepresented the Bible. The opportunity which that Bible foretold and prepared the way for, the opportunity which had been on its way to that people for so many centuries, which might have led them to new life and glory, became, through their not knowing the Scriptures, an occasion of disaster and shame. They crucified the Deliverer, whom they ought to have received with open and thankful hearts.

There can come no second conjuncture of events so momentous for the world as that in which the Jews rejected Christ. But to every age, as it arrives, come high supreme moments, opportunities involving alternatives of wellbeing or woe. And it is, I hardly need to say, a serious loss to any age to come to these gateways of destiny with wrong, or even defective, views of revealed truth. The "secret of the Lord" for all conjunctures is to be found in this truth, and only there. This is the Divine light for the entire life of man. The perfection of individual character, and the salvation of the race, depend alike on the perception and diffusion of this light. And if the ministers of the word have no right perception of it, or only a partial perception, or one distorted by intervening objects, these ends can only be partially and im-

perfectly reached. The very right arm of their power to accomplish them is broken.

Now to know the gospel rightly is to know what it was, as a revelation, intended to teach. It is to know it in the light of its central theme, with its essential truths in the foreground, and its non-essential in the shade. Summed up in the briefest but most vital form, right knowledge of the gospel is knowledge of it as "the gospel of Jesus Christ." It is knowledge of it as the revelation of the Divine will for man in Christ. It is a knowledge whose roots are in "the Word made flesh," and which holds forth to the faith of men the death and resurrection, and to the admiration and imitation of men the life of the Incarnate Word. He, therefore, who finds Christ in the gospel knows the gospel. He who fails to find Christ, who finds something aside from Christ, something subordinate to Christ, has yet to acquire this knowledge.

But this is still a rare knowledge even in the Church. Notwithstanding the amount of reading which there is, they are but few who read the Bible thoroughly, and fewer still who know it in its mighty breadth as a revelation of Jesus Christ to man. With the most, it is the outer story, the incidents of its biographies, isolated precepts, particular promises, sectarian and controversial selec-

tions, which are known ; the inner story, the actual message of God concerning His Son, the good news—the soul of the Bible in short—is hardly, at the end of the reading of many, begun to be known. And that acquaintance with the word in which gospel knowledge really consists, and on which its influence depends, is too commonly missed.

We are, indeed, familiar with expressions, which might seem to indicate a different measure of gospel knowledge. We hear repeated demands for “gospel doctrine,” “evangelical views,” “protestant principle,” “scriptural teaching,” “a free gospel,” “an advanced theology,” “a gospel for the age.” But unhappily, that which passes before the minds of those who use such words is not, in every case, substantially what the words represent. And if it were, the very variety of the demands would seem rather to justify the inference, that our apprehension of the gospel is still fragmentary and sectarian. The popular cries we hear do not therefore necessarily indicate a full knowledge of the truth of Christ. As often as otherwise they betoken a want of tolerance for principles which range either deep or far,—a want of patience with views which embrace the beginning and the end. In the majority of cases, it will be found that they

are demands for abridgment, or at best, the clash and the noise of the struggle between the unstinted liberality, the breadth and flow of the river of truth in the Bible, and the confined neck of the channel which is to receive it in the Church.

Having these convictions, I have thought that it might be a service to preaching, in respect specially of its social purposes, if I could seize some of the existing forms of preaching which seem to me one-sided, or narrow, and exhibit their deficiencies, their departures from the Divine method, and, so far as practicable, the springs and results of such teaching, in the light of the principles and purposes of the gospel.

If the service, as is not unlikely, shall seem to some a sinister one, it is no more than just to myself to say, that it is rendered in no invidious spirit. I shall bring no fantastic accusations against the generation to which I belong. In nothing I have to say, shall there be the implication that the knowledge of the gospel is at a lower ebb than in some former age ; or that the expounders of the gospel in our day, are a degenerate race. On the contrary, I believe that the Church's conceptions of gospel truth are nearer to what they ought to be, than ever before in this country ; and that, on the whole, the gospel is preached with a

greater breadth and fulness and spirituality, than ever before, by any previous race of preachers the Church has had. I could point to a time in our country's history, when to one half of the preachers then living the Bible was simply a text-book for sermons in defence of tyranny. I could point to a still nearer time, when to two-thirds of all who filled the pulpits in England and Scotland, the sermon was a mere framework to stretch pagan precepts on. Hurtful though the misconceptions and misrepresentations I shall have to describe may be, nothing will be found among them so base, so destructive of Christian and all noble life, as either of these.

I do not undertake to name every defective form or misrepresentation of gospel truth. I shall confine myself to forms held forth by preachers who have subscribed the orthodox creeds in our own country; held forth with a certain measure of seriousness, with a conviction that they are right views to present; or at least, with no very lively suspicion that they are wrong.

It is probable, that within these limits, there are no distinctions which do not, to some extent, overlap each other. On the other hand the distinctions exist, and are so far developed, that they have

given names to parties and schools of thought in the Church. Corresponding to these parties, although not rigidly confined to them, there are in our pulpits, six distinct expositions of the Bible, six broadly differing gospels, which either do not rise to the full measure of the truth concerning Christ in the word, or differ from it in some still more essential and vital way. I name them, the *Old Light*, the *New Light*, the *Personal Comfort*, the *Mythical*, the *Ritualistic*, and the *Dilettante* gospels.

I.

I will begin at that preaching which may be named in a homely way the OLD LIGHT preaching of the Church. By this name I mean to indicate that respect for tradition, that preference of the doctrines of the past as such, and more especially of the secondary doctrines of the Reformation, which we find in the sermons of excellent men, who are more concerned about orthodoxy than anything else.

We all feel, that in the history of the Reformation, we have had bequeathed to us the memory of a very noble struggle for Christ's truth. Our traditions, our national character, almost all our greatest monuments, point back to it. Long-buried doctrines were raised to light. The nations sprang

into new life around them. Men felt that glad tidings had come to them, and glad tidings had come. Actual good was accomplished. England, Scotland, and all Christendom, were bettered. The leading spirits of the struggle were men worthy of all respect. Such men as "stand apart upon the forehead of the age to come," and give the world "another heart and other pulses."

It can never be a wrong condition of mind or heart in the Church, which leads its preachers to study or vindicate the aspects of Christian truth which brought light in circumstances like these. We would simply be shutting ourselves out from truth which Providence raised into vast importance at a critical time of the Church's history, if we were to become indifferent to any of the doctrines of the Reformation. But if, under some delusive hope of showing fidelity to old ways, we contract our souls to those doctrines alone; if we enter into engagements to transmit only these to our posterity; if our affections cleave to these alone, and we resolve to receive only what our reforming ancestors received,—we take the position, not of disciples and receivers of Christ's word, but of disciples and receivers of the words of men of like passion with ourselves, who have simply happened to live before us.

captivity I think it cannot be denied that this is the case with a considerable amount of preaching at present. We challenge the gospel preached to us to produce upon its forehead some stamp of the past. It must speak to the present entirely different age, as it spoke to the age of Luther and Calvin, and nothing less and nothing more. It must address to us, on whom lies the burden of handling and solving the social problems of our own time, the very message—almost the very forms of speech—it preached to kings and statesmen two and three hundred years before. The people who make this demand are slow to believe that Christ has new applications of His gospel for every new time. Why this worship of past forms of truth? We cannot feast on the loaves our fathers ate. The gospel is with us as it was with them. And we are only shutting ourselves out from the influences it is fitted to bless us with, when we fail to expect ever fresh lessons for fresh needs. To demand the hereditary exposition in our pulpits is to let go, and refuse to look for "the present truth." And the gospel contracts to the measure of this unwise preference. It comes to us with a transmitted rather than an actual value. It is less precious to us as an immediate gift from God, than as a possession which our fathers valued.

And at last it comes to be used as the old Egyptians used their dead ancestors. We surround ourselves on our sacred occasions with the forms of the dead. But in that way, the spiritual life of the Church cannot prosper. What we try to nourish it by is not the living truth of the gospel, but the embalmed memorials of a life that has passed. It is mere hearsay, voices of the dead, bits of truth broken off from the living body of truth. And we cease ourselves to be living. And no influences go forth from us to help the actual struggle with sin and suffering, to which Christ has called the age to which we ourselves belong.

II.

New Truth

Entirely different is the kind of preaching to which I next refer. It is the preaching of those who have come on some one new truth out of the cluster of Christian truths, and who, in the interest of that one, neglect or depreciate all the rest. I may be allowed to call this NEW LIGHT preaching.

I might justly call it heresy, for this is the very characteristic and essence of heresy,—that it is a choosing, a lifting up in order to choose. And it is not, in the outset at least, the choosing of a *false* doctrine, but, as Coleridge suggested, a false choosing: the choosing of a particular truth and

the lifting of that truth out of the organic whole to which it belongs. It is the separation of some one truth from the knitting and supplemental truths around it, and the enforcement of this one in its isolation, until it becomes, by being so separated and adhered to, a virtual falsehood. The result is a new theology—"another gospel which is not another"—and a doctrine which adds nothing to the strength or zeal which should go out on social work.

The powers of heart and mind which are drawn out under preaching of this sort, are powers which return upon self and consume themselves on self. The new truth is first of all borne in upon a single mind in circumstances to arrest his attention. He sees the value of it for the first time. He sets it apart—lifts it out of connection with other truths—contemplates it—broods over it exclusively. Other minds are informed of his discovery, and invited to share his joy. The new found doctrine becomes a rallying word, a powerful object of thought and study to a group of really earnest souls. They cannot understand how a truth which has arrested themselves so powerfully should have been left by others so much in the background, and so little inculcated from the pulpit. They gather around their novelty. They build a party upon it. They

fix their whole attention on it. It alone is searched for, listened to, received. And a new faith has dawned. By no conscious rejection of any other portion of truth, by no conscious refusal to believe whatever besides this may be contained in the gospel, but simply by shutting up the mind to a single truth, to a single aspect of a fact which has many aspects,—the kindred aspects and truths are first lost sight of—then questioned—then denied—then scorned. And this new discovery, which at first sight seemed to promise good to the Church, becomes a negation, a source of weakness, and a positive hindrance to the proper work of the Church.

The very circumstances in which a new faith of this sort originates impel it to take a controversial attitude, and this is always a weakening of Church life. To clear a space for itself, and justify its own existence, it denounces the doctrines it aims to displace. But the sad thing usually is, that what it actually denounces is hardly ever the truth as others hold it, but that veil of misconception and misrepresentation which hangs in thick folds upon its own heart.

At first, seen in its fresh aspects, in its separation from other truths, the new view may come upon the mind with an agreeable and unwonted

relish. But there is no permanency in this relish, and no fruit of Christian work in it. It is only the luxury of concentrating the mind upon a new and single thought. This ceases to be a luxury. By-and-by the soul finds itself straitened for room in its single doctrine. And it discovers that it has left the temple of truth to take shelter in one of its outer courts, or it contracts its faculty of receiving truth to the measure of this solitary fragment; but, either way, the energies are absorbed which should have been coming forth in the work of the Church.

The impress of Christ on the life of the Church is the result of all the parts of Christian truth. A fragment makes only a fragmentary impression. We need all the truth for the perfection of our life and work. Half truths, solitary doctrines, do not reach far enough or deep enough. And failing in those fruits of well-being which the reception of the full truth ensures, the New Light hearers reap only, or chiefly, what impairs their strength for the service of the Church. They pass into habits of self-laudation and depreciation of those from whom they differ, and become vain and chaffy in their thoughts and ways, and bequeath a spiritual life which forces the next generation into totally opposite extremes.¹

III.

I come now to a very numerous class—to the preachers who address themselves to what I will name the PERSONAL-COMFORT ear of the Church. The sentiment of misery occupies the foremost place in the thoughts of preachers of this order. It is their sense of human misery which guides them to the selection and arrangement of the only fragment of the gospel which they ever preach.

To them all life is clouded. For them the universe itself is wretchedness. The earth in which they have their transitory life is a vale of tears. Men live contiguous to the grave. Diseases, misfortunes, bereavements, fill the horizon of life. And clouds, which are all clouds of sorrow, envelope the life of man.

The preachers who set themselves to work in this element do not much care to ask what the ultimate purpose of suffering may be. They do not wait to consider that by means of these very sorrows Christ may be gathering glory to His name. They look only to their personal troubles, their hardships, their sufferings. And they repair to the great Text-book only for such words as tell them of escape from these hardships, of deliverance from the vale of tears, and of new health,

well-being and joy, and meetings never to be broken up, in the better world.

Far be it from me to say that there is no glad-tidings in the texts to which these preachers repair, and no power in the sermons they preach. But I am free to say, that, taken by themselves, these portions do not supply the power which is to convert the world, or forward the Church even by one hair's breadth in her appointed work.

Is there not a serious want in the life of that Church whose members are concerned only about their misery? Is man merely miserable? Is this the deepest, most urgent fact in his existence? Is this the fact concerning which he should be most anxious to have a gospel from God? If all that Christ's gospel contains concerning it were his own, were thoroughly entertained and rejoiced in by him, would there be nothing more, nothing anterior to this, nothing more importunate than this, about which he should be concerned? Even when there are actual sufferings, and these are heavy,—is a greedy and exclusive brooding over those parts of the gospel which refer to afflictions, his legitimate remedy? Every intelligent Christian knows that it is not. There are evils in man's life, of which afflictions are only a shadow, and the Christ of the true gospel comes first of all with

deliverance from these. The problem which the gospel solves is not, *How shall man escape from misery?* At least it is not this alone. It is not this principally. It is the far higher problem, *How shall man return to the allegiance of a creature?* Our disaffection to our Creator is a more momentous concern than our misery. Our guilt is a more tremendous evil than our unhappiness. And it is also a more fatal one, and one requiring, before the other, to be removed.

But this is the hurt to the life of the Church, and the diminution of her power for good, which is in the preaching to the Personal-Comfort ear. The real problem of life is never faced. The Christ of the miserable is magnified above the Christ of the guilty. The ideal and hope of man is some "happy home" in a world that lies far down in the future. Reunion of friends in heaven is set forth instead of holiness. Happiness is represented as a greater grace than strength for duty. Rest for the weary is allowed to usurp the place of spiritual health and well-doing. And the heart of the hearer is trained to a sense of the weariness of life, and to a yearning for only so much of Christ as shall feed the hope of some day escaping from it altogether. "Bring me to a Saviour by whom my sorrows shall be destroyed.

Tell me of a salvation which is cessation from suffering. Cheer me with the prospect of perpetual joy:"—this is the hungering and thirsting of souls to whom only this gospel is preached. They rise no higher than the anxiety for personal well-being will carry them. Under the exacting sense of their miseries, any interest in the grander purposes of the gospel is impracticable. Personal comforts, interests, and hopes, swallow up everything else.

But surely this is a great evil. All things should speak to the Christian of a purpose beyond himself. All nature, all history, all revelation are in movement, working together towards an end which transcends the dearest interests of self. Wherever we turn, the hum of mighty agencies presses on our ears. The shining of the light, the growth of trees, the preaching of apostles, the rise and fall of empires, the experiences of individuals and of Churches, tell us of an ultimate purpose in all the works of God. To apprehend this purpose, to enter into it, to help it forward, we were created. To this end, our Maker's image was stamped upon our being. For this end, Christ was born and crucified. Indeed, it might be said, that He came just to redeem our race to an interest in this purpose; to impart the power to sympathize in it;

and to transfer us from a position in which we are mere pleasure-seekers, doing our own wills, to one in which our joy and life shall consist in doing what is pleasing to God.

But for hearers and preachers of the Personal-comfort gospel, He has come in vain. Their craving for personal joys leaves them no hunger for righteousness. They take no interest in the claims of His government. They do not care to bestir themselves for a lost world. They will soon be away from its sorrows, and at rest. And so, shutting their ears to the full truth concerning Christ, the gospel they yearn for, and preach, is a gospel emptied of almost every influence for good, an abridgment, a mere fragment of the gospel; a broken and soulless message, which, however clothed as an angel of light, can only pander to the selfishness Christ came to destroy.

IV.

I find it difficult, without speaking scornfully, to characterize and describe the form of unfruitful preaching I have to mention next. It is the MYTHICAL gospel,—the preaching of the Broad school in theology. Its peculiarity comes to light in its treatment of the plain sense of Scripture. While it maintains an apparent reverence

for the gospel, even for the words of the Bible ; while it never misses an opportunity of saying in a general way, that the Bible is the Divine book, yet somehow, it is not the actual Bible, as known to us in our childhood, as read by us amid the perplexities of our manhood, but a critical, or romantic, philosophy of the Bible, which we find them proclaiming for gospel. The moulds of the truth are taken, but seldom the truth itself. Doctrines opposed to the very clearest intimations of the Bible are held forth as Bible doctrine, and simple hearers, seeking food for their souls, are perplexed to find, in their myth-believing neighbours, that even when refusing the inspired statements, they express their refusal in the very language of inspiration.

Suppose the Bible were actually a collection of myths, and the history of Christian thought, the history of a culture supplied by these myths, the preacher I am now describing would represent the "critical period" in this history,—the period when the mind of the worshipper has outgrown the belief of the fables, and seeks in the interpretations of philosophy, a freer and maturer clothing for his thoughts.

A preacher of this class does not find in the book to which he repairs for his texts, what persons turning with simple faith to its statements find.

He complains that we study it too much in its skeleton. "You have the bones," he says, "but the flesh and the blood are with me. Your ordinary, popular, Bible doctrines are ghastly misconceptions." Then he takes up our popular doctrines, and clothes them with his flesh and blood. "Trinity, Atonement, Resurrection, Heaven, Hell," as expressions of Bible verities—as parts of the glad tidings in Christ—are too rigid, too logical, too immature for such as he. The doctrine of the Trinity is a threefold function in the Deity ; the Atonement is transfigured into a sublime martyrdom ; Resurrection into an emergence from moral death ; and Heaven and Hell are ideal projections, by the imagination, of the present conditions of the soul.

Expounded in this way, the gospel becomes very speedily a mere collection of ineffective symbolic and trivial incidents. It is inspired only as the "Pilgrim's Progress," or "Plato's Dialogues" are. Christ is God's son not otherwise than you or I may be. There are miracles in the Gospels, but only moral ones. The dead were raised, but not the literal dead. The eyes of the blind were opened, but they were the spiritually blind. The story, as we read it, is alleged to be the growth of a later age, the wonder-shape of natural

facts in minds to whom they came as a tradition, and who only knew the results. We are told that the whole is the result of a peculiar mental process, that same process which, working back upon the past, supplied the faith of old Greece with mythical heroes and tales of impossible achievement. No statement in the Bible is to be received in its obvious, but in an added transfigured sense. A reader must not let his mind rest on any narrative in the belief that the events happened just as they are set down. The Bible is dissolved into a book of Christian fables. There is no underlying verity left on which the mind can absolutely settle, no immutable fact which the Book is to preserve for all generations. Even with the best interpretations of this school we can never be sure that our feet are on the actual truth of the book, or on truth from God at all. Beneath the lowest deep there is a lower still.

Do I require to say that on these conditions, the faith which is the beginning of both life and work in the Church, is impossible. The minds of the hearers are invited to sit in judgment on the word of God, and to sift it and reject it at their pleasure. They are not urged, as they ought to be, to come to this word, as helpless and needing to be strengthened ; as poor and needing to be en-

riched ; but as interpreters and enrichers. They are made to feel, in relation to the word, that they are givers, not receivers. They come day after day and listen to flattering teachers which tell them that they are lords. And their ears are closed to the admonition : " Be still, and know that I am God."

For minds of a certain order, there is a great fascination in the substitution of interpretation for miraculous statements. It is a satisfaction to such minds to find the miraculous element in Scripture receding out of view. But the retribution of yielding to this fascination is swift and serious, and it comes in the very garb of the evil which is its cause. The myth-believer's own life passes into fabulous relation with Christ and His truth. Christ crucified becomes a myth. His commands cease to be an authority. Interpretation thrusts laws and persons and facts farther and farther into the shade. Revelation dwindles into a human theory ; religion into fine drawn talk. The soul becomes vain and shallow and egotistical—unfit for work, and as unwilling as unfit. The last fibres of Christian feeling in the congregations, where such hearers abound, disappear in the conviction, that the interpreter is of more importance to the gospel than the gospel to the interpreter.

The heavenly vision demands a heavenly eye. Where this is refused the vision returns to Him from whom it came. Philosophies, criticisms, interpretations, expositions, illustrations may be heaped up to supply the blank. But the souls who have decided to listen to such teaching remain unsatisfied and barren; and they fail to advance the Church, by one single step, towards her true work among the people.

V.

No Church could remain contented under such teaching as the Mythical Gospel supplies. The development of selfishness and vanity is too gross for believing and earnest minds. But it is a great calamity when the reaction comes in the shape either of Sacramentarian dogma, or Ritualistic zeal. I think it can hardly be doubted that the Tractarian movement, twenty-five years ago, of which the ritualistic tendency of the present time is the offshoot, owed much of its moral force to the circumstance, that it was a revolt from rationalistic tendencies in doctrine and belief, and a protest against the selfwill, which, by means of those tendencies, was overspreading society and the Church. At all events, it did, in a very emphatic way, appeal from the spirit which only seeks good

things for itself, to the better spirit—better, even when working under the rules of a sacerdotal system—which strives to bring all human life into absolute obedience to the will of Christ, as expressed in the Church. And yet the movement, both in its earlier and later developments—so far as preaching is concerned—has been a downward one, and one which leads to wide departures from the truth of the gospel, and the immense diminution of the Church's power for good.

But at the outset here, there are two things I am anxious to say. Although ritualism is exciting great attention in the Episcopal Church at present, anybody who will open his eyes to what is taking place in other Churches, or who will honestly consider some of the thoughts in relation to Church matters, passing through his own mind, will see that it is not confined to any single Church, but is the outcome of a tendency which is asserting itself more or less distinctly under various disguises, in every Church in the land. In the second place, I would be ashamed to seem to speak of this tendency as if it were merely evil. Ritualism has its foundations in our nature, and in both the nature and the necessities of public worship. Every Church which has song and prayer and order of service has a ritual. And any Church may appeal,

in vindication of such things, to expressions in Scripture which have no meaning if a ritual is not implied.

What I intend to call attention to, is that tendency, in whatever Church occurring, which affixes an undue importance to the "means" of grace, as distinguished from grace itself; which exalts worship above instruction; and, in worship, makes more account of the order, method, and conduct of worship than of worship itself; the tendency which puts forth the strength which should go to the winning of souls and the praising of God, on the enrichment of the service, or the exaltation of some ordinance or office of the Church. This is the RITUALISTIC Gospel.

A few years ago, in the course of pastoral visitation, I came upon a little group of Christian folk—*not* Episcopalian—on whom the sacramentarian element had been pressed. A person full of zeal for this particular element, a leader in a little sect in which ritualism has reached its maddest extreme, had supplied them with the writings of his sect. My friends were in deep perplexity. Here were matters of unquestionable importance; and yet they and the Church of which they were members, were virtually neglecting both the realization and assertion of their importance. They

were of that importance that men could write such words as these concerning them: "Salvation depends upon your right use of these things." "Have we then been negligent of our salvation?" my friends asked. "Has our Church been negligent of her duty in neglecting to make such matters the burden of her teaching on the Lord's day?" I could not object to this anxiety, that it was a concern about things indifferent. I did not, and could not, think that it was. Baptism, the Lord's Supper, the relationships, functions, and offices of the Church are of everlasting interest to the people of God. But I said to my friends: "They are not of the first importance. They are not once to be named as coequal in importance with redemption through the blood of Christ, or regeneration by the Holy Spirit and the Truth, or the headship and supremacy of Christ in His Church, or His Divinity, or His coming the second time to judge the world. The Churches which seem to you to neglect the things which these books have made you anxious about at present, only keep them in their proper place. The Cross of Jesus is of more efficacy in the Church's work than the Sacraments, and therefore the Cross has the foremost place in their teaching. It is of more importance that souls should be converted to God,

than that ordinances should be observed in a particular way; and therefore the salvation of souls is a dearer object to them than the exact observance of ordinances."

One hurtful thing in ritualistic preaching, is its displacement of the contents of the gospel. It puts first what ought to be last, and last what ought to be first. It advances elements to the front which are not essential to salvation, and by means of these, screens out of view the elements which are essential. It puts order of service, dresses of officiating ministers, modes of observing the sacraments, and perhaps things as external and unrelated to the business of a worshipping assembly as crosses, flowers, and incense, ostentatiously before the people and without intending such an effect,—the effect inevitably follows that "the things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God," and on which the affections of the people ought supremely to be set, are passed into the shadow and gradually vanish out of view. The soul of preaching is Christ. But the gospel which delights the Ritualist's ear is the exposition of circumstantials; the enforcement of sacramentarian dogma, or sacerdotal redemption,—in one form or other, the assertion of the old falsehood, that "Salvation is by the Church."

Even when the sermon is evangelical, it is only what pleases the ritualistic ear which is received. The relation to evangelical preaching is, with one who has such an ear, as with an intending emigrant and his daily paper. The paper comes to him as regularly and as fully stored as ever. But it is no longer the same to him. His affections are drifting from his native land towards that new home which is over the sea. Only those morsels of the current news which bear upon the colony have interest for him now. He would hardly believe that he has become so indifferent to home affairs; but he has become indifferent to them. His heart is in the colony and he has only eyes for news from thence. For him, the daily paper has dwindled down into a mere paragraph of shipping and colonial news. And so dwindles and shrinks the best evangelical preaching when addressed to ritualists. Their Church system is dearer to them than evangelical principle. And their ear narrows to the things which are dear to them. There may be no admission to the consciousness that the evangelical principles are not received; but they are not received. Another gospel, a different set of principles, is looked for and believed. The word which God has spoken is no longer welcomed. The affections wait not, like the disciples of old, to receive and distribute the loaves from the

hands of the Master. The memory does not care to retain what the heart has cast out. And the ideas and hopes, the motives and principles which make up the sum of truth in the gospel—and by which they were impressed in better days—begin to depart one by one like the breaking up of a company of friends by night.

VI.

I can hardly consider it accidental that, in tracing the successive forms of defective hearing, and in the order of time in which they appeared in this country, the mythical and ritualistic forms had to be mentioned where they were. In the order of nature, they succeed the other. From the moment the Church allows herself to receive an impaired gospel, and to foster preferences for isolated doctrines, facts, or duties, she is on the path to a state of things in which the interpretation and myths of the rationalist and the incense and vestments of the ritualist shall contend in the common endeavour to thrust out the Gospel of Christ. "From them who have not shall be taken even that which they have." To neglect or despise any thought of the Divine heart, unfits the soul who does so for cleaving long even to the thoughts he loves. The shell from whose mystic chambers come the murmurs of God's sea of

love, tells a story which must be received in its entirety or not at all. Side truths and half truths, sectional and sentimental views, rationalistic criticism and sacerdotal and sacramentarian dogma all lie on the incline to barren profession ; and what I have last to name,—of all kinds of preaching the worst,—is the preaching of a DILETTANTE gospel.

Partly from the shallowness of spiritual life in many who attend our churches there is always a tendency, more or less developed, to look upon preaching and worship with a merely æsthetic eye. To hearers in whom this tendency is allowed to dominate, the great text book of the preacher is far more a repertory of beautiful sayings, wondrous stories, and sublime poetry than a revelation of truth from God ; and the pictorial has the place in their affection which Christ should have. The psalm, in like manner, is music much more than praise. And they think nothing to confess that they go to a church for its music. The sermon is a Sunday entertainment. And the entire service a merely pleasant and respectable method of whiling away the time.

Almost nobody praises the details and instruments of the service as dilettante hearers do. They think the Bible “the grandest book,” “the oldest book,” “the sublimest book,” in the world. The

voice of the preacher, the management of the choir, the ventilation, the architecture, the decoration, of the place of worship, are all serious subjects of their concern. Whether the worship is Catholic or Protestant, orthodox or heretical, is a matter of less concern.

It has always seemed to me, that the challenge thrown out by preachers sometimes to produce poetry, eloquence, or philosophy, equal to those of the Bible, is a concession to this dilettante tendency, if it be not itself a grape from the same cluster. Surely it ought to be known to all who would say a word for the Bible, that its peculiarity does not lie in the excellence of its provisions for meeting the dilettante taste, but in the supremacy of its claims on the conscience. It is by manifestation of the truth to the conscience, not by eloquence or poetry, that its true worth is evinced. And nothing is gained either for its vindication, or for the commendation of its truth, by appeals which only submit it to the standard by which uninspired books are judged.

I make the same assertion with respect to that fondness for elucidation of the ancient manners and customs of the East, which hearers, during the last thirty years, have learned to long for. It is a real, but perhaps less conscious development of the

same tendency. The Bible is repaired to as a text-book of pictorial costumes, national habits, architectural and agricultural methods. The Christian truth contained in the sermon is nothing in comparison with Eastern illustration. The hearer lingers about at the doorways of the truth to examine pictures and explanations which do nothing for his soul. And an intelligent acquaintance with the gospel he needs becomes almost an impossibility.

I shall never forget the advice given to some Sabbath-school teachers by an old elder of the Secession Church, about the time this excessive elucidation of the Eastern world began. "It may be good to know the height and the girth of the cedars of Lebanon, and to have in your Bibles pictures of old ruins and ways of life. But it is not by things like these that children will ever be turned to God. And after all, no picture or story interests the minds of young and old as the story of Jesus on the cross can do. And that story is the heart of the Bible, and should be the heart of all teaching from the Bible, in the school or the church."

The dilettante gospel has most attractions, of course, for people of a literary and aesthetic turn of mind. What they seek in the sermons they go

to hear is not religion, but as they are fond to style it, "the poetry and philosophy of religion." They would be the last to suspect that such a hearing of God's word is superficial; but superficial it certainly is. It is a craving for an external thing which brings them to the church at all. They give to the accidental and unessential the respect which should only be accorded to the message of God. And the hurt to the cause of Christ, in yielding to such cravings, is that it dethrones the fact, that God is speaking through the gospel to human souls. Christ is not in all the thoughts of such hearers. The outward construction of the word, its literary or artistic features, its pathos, simplicity, or force,—these are canvassed, and accepted or refused, but God's message and meaning under all is left standing without.

It is hardly possible to overstate the evil to which preaching which panders so this class must lead. For those who indulge in it, the Bible inevitably dwindles down into an uninspired book—at best, a book only more interesting than other books that could be named. The gospel which is proclaimed from its pages—the blessed gospel of the grace of God—passes utterly out of view. And hearers will listen to what is presented to them for a whole lifetime, and yet fail to receive

one right-hearted impulse towards the work for which God is sustaining a Church in the world.

What are appeals to mercy, demands for sacrifice, calls for work in the interests of the poor and the heavy laden, to hearers instructed by preachers of this class? It is a language they do not understand. They do not even know the commonest uses of the ordinance in which they seek an æsthetic delight. It would surprise them to be told that there was a connection, between preaching and the salvation of the lost. A preacher who lets Christ's word forth on some unrighteousness in the land, on some gross vice in our social customs, or on the sufferings of the poor, is nearly certain to be looked upon as vulgar, or mad, by this class. "Did we come here to listen to such things?" they will say, as they are leaving the church. There may be whole worlds of coarseness and wickedness in society, at the very door, but they must not obtrude themselves in the preaching to which dilettante ears are listening. "It is tiresome, all that. On Sunday we want rest."

The danger to the Church, when hearers of this stamp abound, is far more than a danger to liberty of prophesying. It is the very life of the Church they imperil. I do not hesitate to say that a Church who gives room to such people and allows

them to have sway, in pulpit or in pew, is in danger of drifting, if it have not already begun to drift, towards that barren sea in which the parable of the Good Samaritan, and Christ's ministry among the sick, and Calvary, and the Judgment Day shall become mere objects of oratorical art, mere beautiful stories and bursts of eloquence, which people shall listen to as they would to readings from a novel, and rise and go their several ways unaffected and unimproved.¹

¹ "For there are two ways of regarding a sermon : either as a human composition, or a Divine message. If once we begin to regard the preacher, whatever his faults, as a man sent with a message to us, which it is a matter of life or death whether we hear or refuse ; if we look upon him as set in charge over many spirits in danger of ruin, and having allowed to him but an hour or two in the seven days to speak to them ; if we make some endeavour to conceive how precious these hours ought to be to him, a small vantage on the side of God, after his flock have been exposed for six days together to the full weight of the world's temptation,—and he has been forced to watch the thorn and the thistle springing in their hearts, and to see what wheat had been scattered there, snatched from the wayside by this wild bird and the other ; and at last, when breathless and weary with the week's labours, they give him this interval of imperfect and languid hearing, he has but thirty minutes to get at the separate hearts of a thousand men, to convince them of all their weaknesses, to shame them for all their sins, to warn them of all their dangers, to try by this way and that to stir the hard fastenings of those doors where the Master Him-

I have now recounted the principal forms of defective hearing, which seem to me to explain the meagreness of our harvest from preaching. If the Christian Church in this country has done less than she might among the poor, it is, for one thing, because her members do not come under the full impression of the message she proclaims.

But if this be the real explanation, it is one we may contemplate without despair. The remedy is in preaching and in the gospel of the Master. Let those who know and love the gospel demand the re-enthronement of the sermon where it has been deposed, and the expansion of it into earnest Christian teaching, where it has been degraded. And where it has to be addressed to inhospitable hearts, to ears which are dull of hearing, or which itch after vain traditions and novelties and questions which do not minister profit—let the true

self has stood and knocked yet none opened, and to call at the openings of those dark streets, where Wisdom herself hath stretched forth her hands, and no man regarded,—thirty minutes to raise the dead in,—let us but once understand and feel this, and we shall not easily bear with ornament or oratory in the mouth of the messenger. We shall wish that his words may be simple, even when they are sweetest; and the place from which he speaks, like a marble rock in the desert, about which the people have gathered in their thirst.”—Ruskin : “Stones of Venice.”

preachers continue their high task, in the assurance that in the end God's word will "prosper in the thing for which it has been sent, and not return to Him void."

It is by preaching souls are to be converted and built up in God. It is by preaching, no less, the defects in hearing are to be remedied, and dead congregations and unearnest ministers recalled to life.

"Come from the four winds, O Breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.

"So I prophesied, as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army."

III.

THE RANGE OF PREACHING.

“When human thought and life are spreading out into ever wider circuits, the Christian ministry must seek to show itself a debtor to men of every class and character, and must endeavour to prove that there is no department of thought or action, which cannot be touched by the Gospel, which is the manifold wisdom of God.”—*Rev. Dr. John Ker.*

WHAT I have been pleading for throughout, is a wider range of preaching.

It is Christ we preach. In all circumstances and for all purposes it is still and only Christ.

In preaching, it is to the heart we make our main appeal. Whatever sphere we seek to influence, it is by this gateway we approach it, it is from this centre we must work.

But when these two conditions of preaching are most fully conceded and observed, the range is neither narrowed nor obscured. With Christ in our teaching, there is a way through the heart to the world's end.

There is a bridge in a certain Austrian city, in the parapets of which twelve statues of the Saviour are niched. He is represented in so many different

relationships :—a Prophet, a Priest, a King, a Physician, a Pilot, a Shepherd, a Sower, a Carpenter, and so forth. The country people, coming into the city in the early morning with produce for the market, pause before the Sower or Shepherd Christ, and offer their prayers through Him. The artisan, two hours later, coming to his workshop, bends before the Carpenter. Later still, the sailor worships the Pilot. And in the warm sunlight of the forenoon, the invalids, creeping out to the fresh air of the country, at once rest and pray under the statue of the Divine Physician. Each appeals to the Christ who seems nearest and most related to himself.

Whatever other merits these statues may possess, they embody this great fact, that Christ has many aspects in which He appeals to men, and that the glad tidings He offers to our race ranges over all the necessities, toils, relationships, and circumstances on which these aspects are turned. From the humble Man who, in the carpenter's shop in Nazareth, carried the common burden of human labour, to the Divine Physician, who heals us of labour's curse, and at last, of death itself,—and from the Prophet who, from that same Nazareth, went forth to bear witness to the truth, to the King who rules over the kingdom of the truth, and over the souls and natures of men, is a wide and bound-

less range. It is this wide and boundless range, the preacher of the gospel sweeps.

Although the message of the preacher is one and unchangeable, the application of the message, the adaptation of it to human needs, the purposes it has to fulfil, the aspects of the salvation it announces, are endless, and imply an infinite sweep.

All the circumstances, purposes, and motives which belong to life; all that life may know or think or do; all that it has been, or is, or may become, fall within the range of the testimony which the preacher is called to bear.

All the worlds, all the ages, all nature and spirit and existence, all the interests of all life, stand round about the preacher, and the word he preaches claims to shed light over all. "Its going forth is from the end of heaven, and its circuit unto the ends of it; and there is nothing hid from its heat."

Under the pressure of a zeal which it is impossible not to respect, men have fixed their attention on one necessity of the soul, on one critical moment in life, and on one set of doctrines to fit that moment, and said to preachers: "Attend to these. Repeat these for ever. In the continuous repetition of these consists faithful preaching of the gospel." But it is only needful to take that moment in life, which is undoubtedly the most important that

life possesses, and on which all true preaching turns its most passionate efforts—the moment of conversion—and ask: *To what purpose is it sent to us?* to see the unwisdom of narrowing the preacher's range.

I shrink from the possibility of having it supposed that I undervalue the great work of converting souls. And I know how I ought to hold myself ready for both the shame and the glory of knowing nothing but "Christ and Him crucified"—the doctrine fitted to convert. But conversion is not the only thing intended by God in the revelation of Himself by Christ; and the reception of those aspects of the revelation which are fitted to convert is not the reception of all the fulness of the good news to man which is "the power of God" to save the world.

Conversion is an end, simply because it is a beginning. It is the dark soul turning towards its native light: the chaos in spiritual life receiving the elemental principle of order: the first movement, in the individual, of a work which is to reshape the entire life, and to embrace in its reach of purpose not only the individual, but the society to which he belongs.

Why concentrate the energies of preaching on the beginning? The key-note is at the end. We

are bound to proclaim the truth in its entire compass, and for all the purposes it is intended to fulfill. And surely, without impairing our faith in the doctrines fitted to convert, we may look beyond the work of converting souls, and let the light of these doctrines fall on the boundless fields of thought and social life over which they shine.

Is there no gospel to the converted? The Christian has been lifted out of his previous isolation. He is now a member of the Christian commonwealth. Can he fail to be interested in its prosperity? Can he help being grieved by what hinders its prosperity? He cannot see unrighteous influences at work without longing for a time when such a state of things shall be reversed. The fact that such a time is possible, is promised, and is soon to arrive; the fact that God reigns; that His judgments are abroad on the earth; that He is every day moving onward to the rectification of what is wrong, and the establishment of the right,—these facts, and facts related to these, and like them, are as truly glad tidings to the Christian's soul now, as truly parts of the gospel of his salvation, as the fact of a Saviour crucified was in the hour when he stood, appalled and alone, in the presence of his personal sins.

Conversion looks forward as well as backward.

And so does preaching. The preacher has been anointed to a vocation which implies an interest in all the purposes to which conversion looks. He cannot rest at those which terminate on individuals. He is a fellow-labourer with God Himself in the establishment and extension of a Divine kingdom among men. And every hope and purpose fairly within the range of that kingdom, is legitimate task work for the Christian preacher.

We have only to recall the purposes for which Christ came into the world, to see how universal the range of His preachers' message must be.

He came to reveal the love of God to man. And in that purpose lies, for His preachers, the commission to range over all the heights and depths of the doctrine and outshining of that love.

He came to diffuse this love through the daily lives of men, and to bring human beings to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world. And in that purpose lies the high vocation, to testify before all men, as Paul did before Felix, of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come."

He came to perfect the characters of those who accept this love; to make saved men more loving, more reverent, more truthful, more nearly copies

of Himself. And in that purpose lies the obligation to testify concerning the beauty of life which Christ led, and the influence of that Spirit by whose aid only it can ever become the life of the souls of man.

He came to bring men under "the power of the world to come." And in that purpose lies the whole blessed domain of Christian hope, the second coming, the resurrection of the body, and the life in heaven, which preachers are bound to frequent as diligently as they do the neighbourhood of that cross which stands in the centre of the domains of faith.

All these purposes bind into one the great purpose of organizing a people to take part with Himself in the vast work of the world's redemption. In this last far-reaching purpose, to which all Christian light and doctrine, and all spiritual agencies in heaven and on earth bend—lies, for the Christian preacher, the obligation to stir Christ's people up to all Christian service, to heroic enterprises, to missions of mercy, to sacrifices, prayers, gifts, and labours, until the light of the Divine love, in the life of His people, reaches out to the very ends of the sin-darkened world.

It is only to specify a part of this last-named purpose, to say, that Christ came to reveal and

commend, by the embodied life of His Church, the Divine principles on which the Creator intended human society to be built. Apart from the principles it has already received from the Christian Church, social life is full of the very anomalies, miseries, and oppressions, from which Christ came to redeem mankind. Over all these things surely the testimony of His ambassadors may range. They have to confront the things which work woe, with the light revealed to put that woe away. Can a preacher of God's righteousness see a wrong and be silent? or human suffering, and not tell of the pity of God? It belongs to him to pour forth on the torn and bleeding hearts of men, on broken lives, and on oppressed classes, the healing of the Master's love, and to let its sweetness filter down through all the organs of pain and suffering in the individual, to the very roots of social life. And down to these roots and up to the topmost twig which quivers in the storm, and out over all wretchedness, want, and woe, and wherever eyes are wet with tears, and hearts are crushed with suffering, the word he is entrusted with ought to range.

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." What is preaching worth, if it fail to send forth its light over all the surface which that command surveys? Preacher

and people stand together on the edge of a world lying in wickedness. Beside them, before them, are masses of untaught human life, festering gulfs of sin, and dreary wastes of debasement, cruelty, and crime. The great majority of our fellow-creatures are still entangled or lost in these. And surely—considering the issues at stake—the woe mentioned in Scripture might justly be pronounced on the preachers who can be silent before this spectacle of a lost world, and on the preaching which does not range over all the land which God means His people to go in and possess.

The truth is, that these attempts, from whatever motive made, to abridge the range of the pulpit, and to restrict its testimony to single aspects of life or doctrine, never succeed long, and do not deserve to succeed at all. Only the full round of truth, sweeping all circumstances and conditions of our existence here, can satisfy and nourish souls, and help them to do Christ's work upon the earth.

And this would be apparent to even the most prejudiced, if these preferences for one-sided and peculiar aspects of pulpit teaching were only stated in the negative, and those who advocate them were required to come to details, and specify the spheres of thought and life which the preacher of the Gospel may not properly enter.

It is the sphere of SCIENCE, I shall suppose, from which the preacher is to withhold his testimony. But he and those he addresses are denizens of that universe which science reveals, and they can never forget that its Maker is the same gracious Father who gave His Son to die for men.

The Christian preacher has read the Book he expounds to little purpose, who has not discovered that the deepest secrets of the very sphere which science occupies are reserved for those who search for them in the light of the cross. In a sense which points to the ultimate purpose of creation, the Victim on that cross was slain "from the foundation of the world." Apart from this deep reason for maintaining a right to enter the world of science, it would be especially inappropriate at the present moment to stand aloof. The conclusions of science are altering the forms of some of our most cherished conceptions of things, and affecting our view of many Bible subjects, and going in and out and interlacing with the outgrowths of almost all human thought. And, what has to be still more considered, they are ranging many of its most earnest students in attitudes which are unintentionally antagonistic to revelation. It belongs to the witness for Christ to keep the hearts of Christ's people open for all truth from whatever source it

may come. It is his task in relation to science to adjust its claims with those of the revelation he represents. It should be his ambition to reconcile the two, and unite their students at the foot of the cross. And he will not fail, if a true man in his vocation, to assert for the Gospel a fearless welcome to all truth, and an unwavering assurance that no discovery can be reached, which shall not turn out in the long run to the advantage of the testimony of Jesus.

Or, I shall suppose it is the domain of ART from which the preacher is to withhold his testimony. But art proposes to itself to interpret the beauty and wonder of the universe. And all things wonderful, and all beauty, are the work of Christ. The faculty of seeing and of bringing home to human hearts the beauty of things is the direct gift of Christ. And no witness of His can be silent respecting the use of this gift. People say, "Art cannot save the soul." History says, "The highest developments of art in nations have not hindered these nations from descending into the lowest depths of immorality." But is no less true, that there is a Christian and an un-Christian art; and a Christian and un-Christian way of handling art,—of building houses, and cutting statues, and painting pictures, and singing songs. And nothing can

come between the preacher and his testimony, in respect of such objects, either for praise or blame, if he is called to give it forth.

Or, to take the crucial instance, it is POLITICS from which the preacher of the Gospel is excluded. "He must not be," so the phrase runs, "a political preacher." Well, I put in a special protest against those who would shut out politics from the pulpit. Politics is the art of dealing with the relations of society. Was our Lord indifferent to these relations, that His ambassadors should be dumb concerning them? What meant that sorrow of His, that the people were as sheep without a shepherd; or that other sorrow, that Jerusalem was passing into the grasp and shadow of its doom, if He took no interest in politics? I venture to affirm, that we shall never read the Sermon on the Mount, and most of the prophecies of the Old Testament, in the light in which they ought to be read, until we read them as political sermons. And, true to the instincts of Gospel life, there never yet has been a revival of preaching in which there has not been a mixture of political sermons. Recall the wholesome patriotism of the German Reformers when the Turks threatened to enter Europe. Recall the bold testimony of Puritan and Covenanting pulpits in the seventeenth century, when king-craft, priest-

craft, and time-serving, threatened to crush the liberties of the people. There was indeed one conspicuous exception to this testimony in Scotland. The pulpit of the saintly Leighton was silent. "If all the brethren have preached to the times," said he, "may not one poor brother be allowed to preach for eternity?" But no one in the presbytery, which took him to task, knew better than Leighton himself, when he uttered these words, that they were but an adroit apology for a most serious omission of duty. If all the ministers of the word in Scotland at that time had refrained from politics as Leighton did, the battle of religious and civil liberty would never have been won. It is the one blot on this good man's fame. There cannot be a crisis in the national life, such as happened to Scotland in Leighton's time, in which the Christian pulpit can afford to be dumb. And there cannot be a revival of preaching in such a crisis, in which there will not be an interest taken in the political and social well-being of the people. It is not that the preacher brings the political platform into the pulpit, or speaks in the transitory phrases of the politics of his time. He abides within the ranges of the Gospel. It is still Gospel language he uses. It is still Gospel truth he proclaims. But the sweep of his testimony is over all that politics

can cover, from the character of a law, to the character, if need be, of the men by whom the law is imposed,—from the draining of a city, which is the health, and may often be the morality, of the inhabitants, to the planting of a colony, which may be their deliverance and their wealth.

The preachers of Christ's truth dare not let politics alone, nor art, nor science, nor any other department of human thought or life. His vocation is to leaven all thought with the thought of God, and all life with the life of God.

The testimony is light, and, of its own nature, breaks forth on every side. It cannot be narrowed; cannot be made monotonous. To preach it is to bring glad tidings of a Redeemer into every sphere which the intellect of man occupies. To ignore any sphere, to pass it by, to say of it, It is unfit or unworthy to be occupied; it is beneath the Gospel, or above the Gospel, or aside from the Gospel,—is just to confess, that Jesus is a Redeemer for some spheres of human life, but not a Redeemer for others. And therefore, speaking for every minister of the testimony, I claim to stand at the doors of all the spheres,—of knowledge, activity, feeling, hope, life, enterprise,—and cry to those who are entering in, "Here, in this word of Jesus, is a message from God to you."

But whilst I thus assert the wide range of Christian preachers, and the liberty to sweep that range, I thankfully acknowledge that its daily labours lie in homelier spheres than those which my illustrations suggest. And to prevent all misconception, I will say this,—for, once that the preacher is required to enter such as I have specialized, he shall, even in fulfilment of the social side of his mission, twenty times have to apply his testimony to the spheres which cluster about our homes. For, closer to our lives than science, or art, or politics, lie sin and suffering, and joy and sorrow, and belief and unbelief, and charity and self, and childhood and old age, and manhood and womanhood, and all the daily intercourse of life, in families, and between souls and God. On those remote, but not higher ranges of life and thought, the light of pulpit testimony may at times be required to fall; but into these nearer, homelier, more familiar spheres, it must be carried day by day.

“The Christianity which is now and hereafter to flourish, and through its power in the inner circles of human thought to influence ultimately in some manner more powerful than now the mass of mankind, must be filled full with human and genial warmth, in close sympathy with every instinct and need of man, regardful of the just title of every faculty of his nature, apt to associate with and make its own all good whatever in him, which goes to enrich and enlarge the patrimony of our race.”—*Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, M.P.*

IV.

DETRACTION.

"When preaching sinks to the second place, it is either that we have abandoned the gospel or neglected the world. . . . As the essence of religion is feeling, Christianity launches its ark upon the tide of sympathy and popular concourse, on which, also, the great interests of liberty and human rights are borne down from age to age, and, in fearless utterance, secures a yet wider and higher victory. Christianity must speak or die. When its spirit within it is most stirred by surrounding sin and evil, it must dispute in the market-place, and from the summit of Areopagus preach Jesus and the Resurrection. How can such a religion ever lose the soul of eloquence, sweeping through all the passions of the heart, grappling with the tremendous storms and tumults of conscience, and stilling them by Christ's word, unsealing wonders of grace, to which nature is familiar, art tame, and science poor—lifting the curtain of the grave, conquering death, and worse than death, and, by Christ's Cross and passion, and investing all things with the awful light of immortality. To pronounce the funeral oration of the pulpit, which deals with powers like these, is to proclaim the extinction of faith and to celebrate the obsequies of Christianity. . . . So far from the resources of preaching being exhausted, I believe, with Robert Hall, that there are heights and depths in it not yet explored, and that we are on the eve of new developments of its influence."—*Professor Cairns.*

IN the indiscriminate sifting to which both institution and beliefs have been subjected,—in

these days of transition from one era to another,—it would have been strange indeed, if the work of preaching had been overlooked. It occupies a conspicuous place in the Church. It is of such mark among her institutions, that it may be truly said,—the Church exists to sustain and extend the boon of preaching. Her Home Mission is the endeavour to supply it where it is not yet enjoyed in our own land. Her Foreign Mission is the attempt to send it to the lands of the heathen. And if any competent man were set to specify that instrument of mission work on which all others depend—that one vocation on which all others converge—it is Preaching he would be compelled to name. But of all the instrumentalities of God's kingdom, there is none which has had to carry a greater burden of obloquy and misunderstanding than this. At the present moment, views regarding it are current which must entirely hide from those who hold them its true character and aims; views which are none the less hurtful, that they are held by friends as well as foes, and oftentimes are rather implied than expressed, and rather acted on than openly avowed. I have thought, therefore, that I might possibly be doing service to the cause of missions; and that, at all events, I could be advancing nothing out of harmony with the senti-

ments which should animate us here,¹ if I were to name over, and fairly and candidly look in the face, those mistaken views to which I have referred, and attempt some reply to them, and in doing so, some vindication, however brief, of that great instrument of God on which He has made the conversion of the world to depend, and to the use of which so many of us here have devoted our lives. There is just one remark of an explanatory kind, which, in justice both to my subject and myself, I think it necessary to make. My subject requires me to deal with preaching chiefly on its manward side. But in all I shall have to say, I will assume that the grand burden of preaching is the salvation of the soul; that the grand truth in preaching is the Cross of Christ; and that, even with that truth, the result must wait on God. Paul may preach; Apollos water; God only can give increase.

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The error to which I shall first allude is one which to some extent underlies every other I shall have to name. I would exactly characterize it if I were to call it the contemptuous view of preaching. But I

¹ This and the succeeding chapters were given as an address at the Annual Missionary Meeting of the United Presbyterian Synod: 1866.—An outbreak of scornful depreciation of the work of preaching had just before appeared in some English and Scotch newspapers.

prefer to say, it is an error which embodies itself in sneers at the want of intellect in the work and matter of preaching. Those sneers are shot forth in all sorts of places, but for the most part on platforms, in newspapers, in review articles, and in books of fiction. The scorers sit behind their ungenerous sentences and fling out such taunts as these:—"What poor stuff preaching is! What poor work for a human intellect to be engaged in! What a poor set, the men who are engaged in it! And what fools the people are, who go to hear their sermons." But these are old sneers against this great work. They are as old as the days of Paul, and have been handed down in a succession, the very opposite of apostolic, from his day to our own. Paul is probably quoting the very language of the scorers of his day, when he writes of "the foolishness of preaching." As he made his way through the streets of Corinth to the synagogue of the Jews, he may have heard the fast young men of that city letting it out on him as he passed. As much as that, and more, he had to listen to at the Cross of Athens from the old newsmongers who made his audience there—"Let us hear what this babbler will say." It is almost the very words which the detractors of our own time continue to use. As if by some malign fate, the tide of Christian thought and feeling had passed them by and left

them arid and unimproved on some bank of the old Pagan creed,—fast young men in England and old newsmongers in Scotland are still found who sneer at “the foolishness of preaching,” and speak of the successors of Paul, in the sublime work of preaching, as their predecessors did of the great Paul himself,—as “babblers” who have nothing important to say.

Now, although I am perfectly aware of the utter and scandalous falsity of these sneers, I think the meanness, the shabbiness, the ingratitude of them still worse. Let us suppose, for a single moment only, the possibility of these sneers being put into practical effect. Preaching being so dull an affair, let us imagine it were put down and made to cease. Would nothing precious, nothing worth having and retaining, disappear? Have those who scoff at it, any secret in reserve which would enable them to do the work which, however inefficiently by the human instruments, it certainly does? Would review articles, public lectures, newspapers, or books of fiction, in any quantity, supply its place? Nay, I will press back my question into the very territory of the scorers themselves. I admit that, next to our liberties, civil and religious, the most glorious heritage of our country is its literature. Suppose, then, sermons being so poor an outcome

of the human intellect, we consent to draw our pen through the sermon writers of England and Scotland! Would the most flippant of these modern Corinthians, would the loudest of these modern Athenians, themselves consent to such a sacrifice? Why, in Scotland alone, if we place on one side some eight or ten names, *all* the rest of our specifically Scottish literature—and by that I mean the literature which has moulded us and made us what we are—is composed directly, or indirectly, of sermons. I guess Scotland would think twice, and many times over twice, before it would allow a depreciatory mark to be entered against the religious writings of Knox, or Rutherford, or Leighton, or Durham, or Boston, or the Erskines, or Chalmers, or Irving,—to say nothing of living preachers whose published sermons are passing into the permanent literature of the country, and whose intellect and work are second to those of none, in any other department of activity or thought that could be named.

The case is stronger still if we look to England. The men who have most deeply and widely influenced England in our own generation are preachers. Whether for good or evil, it is the fact that we can point to no men in other spheres who have moved the tides of thought and feeling as

Arnold, and Whately, and Newman, and Manning, and Maurice, and Robertson, and Jowett, and Mansel, of the Church ; and Vaughan, and Binney, and Spurgeon, among Nonconformists, have done. And I wonder what English literature would be without the sermons of its great preachers ? Could you sponge out Hooker, or Latimer, or Jeremy Taylor, or Owen, or Howe, or Baxter, or Barrow, or Cudworth, or Smith of Cambridge, or even Horseley, or South ? And came there no glory on England out of the sermons of Wesley and Whitefield, poor though they look now in their printed form ? And are the published sermons of Foster and Robert Hall nothing in the literature of our country ? The men whose scornful detractions compel such replies as these are perhaps beyond the reach of words spoken here. But it is right for us, who are engaged in the task they scorn, to stay ourselves up with the fact that the glory of advancing the lives of men towards righteousness belongs to us and not to them. To the latest age of time, when the men who have blessed the world are counted up, the questions which Paul put long ago shall continue to be put,—“Where,” in this company of workers, “is the wise ? Where is the scribe ? Where is the disputer of this world ?”—God will still “make foolish the wisdom of the

world," and by "the foolishness of preaching" save them who believe.

Another error current about preaching, and one which, for want of a better term, I shall name the despairing view, is the low estimate of its present influence which many have. Preaching, it is said, has lost its ancient power. It is not as it was in the old days—the blessed, golden old days—when it was a life-deep, world-wide influence among men. I would not care to notice this error if it did not happen to be held by men who are themselves engaged in the work of preaching, and are earnest in the doing of their work, and yearning daily for larger results. It is the past which leads these men astray. They do not sufficiently consider that it is only results which are visible in the past. They see behind them times crowded with results: Revival times; Reformation times; times when nations were born in a day. Their longing hearts go back to the age of the apostles. An august spectacle of preaching power rises before their eyes. They see Churches gathered out of the very crowds who crucified our Lord. They find believers in Rome and Corinth. They witness gatherings in the market-place changed into assemblies of inquiring worshippers. They behold crowds passing along the street arrested, and made

to hear and live. As they listen, the voice of prayer mingling with the murmur of Philippian brooks goes up to the Father. Palaces, dungeons, the very dwellings of the dead become places of Christian worship. The still small voice of the Word, issuing from the empty grave of Jesus, reaches to the ends of the earth. The whole earth is filled with its glory. "Why is the Present not as the Past?" they ask, in a kind of sacred despair. "The same great truths which smote the waiting hearts of men in that old time, and thrilled them into love, are in our daily teaching. The very words by which apostles melted the hearts of thousands on the streets of Jerusalem are our texts. But the old power is wanting. The dead masses are not quickened. The sleepful membership is not aroused. They separate without emotion. They carry no new principle of life away with them. And on the morrow, neither by word or act shall they be known to differ from the selfish crowd which jostles them in the indiscriminate business of common life." Who would not sympathise with men whose error has its roots in regrets and longings so legitimate as these? But our sympathy must not blind us to the fact that they are in error none the less. I am not one to disparage the power that went forth with God's

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Word in any by-past age, least of all in the great age of the apostles. Paul and Peter and John rise above the preachers of the present day, by the whole height that inspiration and miraculous gifts rise above sanctified intellect and common Christian activity. But in comparing the past and the present, we may fairly put these exceptional distinctions aside. They were simple preachers as well as apostles, and with no advantage as preachers more than we possess. We do not require, in considering the results of their teaching, to look at them in those functions which can never be ours—the functions of expressing and completing the revelation of the Word. We can compare the results which flowed forth, not from their special gifts as apostles, but from their ordinary manifestation of truth to the consciences of men as preachers, with the results which have flowed, and are flowing forth, from the same manifestation of truth by preaching in our own day; and I am free to assert, and (fair occasion being given for the task) I am ready to demonstrate, that, judging the results by Churches, or character, or influence, or work, we have the results of modern preaching embodied in purer, more loving, more zealous, more Christ-like Churches than any which Paul or his companions helped to build. Do not say, therefore, “Oh that

we had such days back again." I dare to assert that God has given us better days. And do not depreciate the power of preaching in times like our own, in which the Word must flow quietly along the channels of everyday life and duty, by bringing it into unfair comparison with the power put forth in those extraordinary times, when God summoned it to battle for the overthrow of a world. Is there only one form in which spiritual power can manifest itself? Are we for ever to demand sudden changes, revolution, reformations? Must the world's history be carried on by convulsive struggles, to satisfy us that there is power in the Word?¹ Great unquestionably is the power by which revolution and reformations are wrought out; but it is less, less great, less noble, less Christ-like, than the power which, from day to day, from year to year, and over all the breadth of Christendom, and up to the topmost heights of thought, and down to the lowest hollows of suffering, supplies and sustains and carries forward the spiritual energies and life of the living generation of Christians. Blessed are the lightning and the thunder, the storm and

¹ "The crowd generally prefers the abnormal force which exceeds to the equal force which persists. The crowd has neither the time nor the patience to verify the immense power concealed beneath a uniform appearance."—*Balzac*.

the hurricane, by which plagues are scattered ; but more blessed is the morning light, the ever-recurring sunshine, by which man is roused to his daily labours, and the little birds to their song.

I come next to an error, which has many developments, but whose general drift is to assign to preaching a secondary place in working out the two great ends of Church life—the edification of Churches at home, and their extension abroad. “Give us less of preaching and more of prayer and praise,” say those who, under the influence of this error, have turned their attention to the edification of the Churches at home. “It is worship which is the first and great end of our Sabbath assemblies.” “Give us less of the preacher and more of the schoolmaster,” say those of the same class, who have turned their thoughts to the extension of the Church abroad. “Schools first, Churches next,” is their method of Christianizing the world. And both in home work and foreign there are many who would put the stress on organizing ; on systematic performance of society work ; on the excitement of large assemblies, and the thorough working of schemes for benevolence, and the instruction of the young.

Now, before saying a word on these erroneous views themselves, I have one common complaint

to make against them all. I complain of the unfairness of those who express these views. I complain that, one and all, they ignore facts which are an answer to their objections, and a complete vindication of the existing methods of the Church. In the upbuilding of the internal life of the Church, for example,—Is preaching no part of public worship? Has that great organ, by which the soul of one man kindles in other souls admiration of the mighty works of God, no part in the service of praise? And in the extension of the Church to heathen lands, has the schoolmaster been left at home? Did those who speak in this way never hear of the noble Moffat teaching his Bechuana children their alphabet to the tune of “Ye banks and braes o’ bonny Doon”? Are they ignorant of the peerless education-establishments which Dr. Duff founded in India? Do they know nothing of the schools and colleges of Turner and Nisbet in Polynesia? Have any of the missionary Churches forgotten the schoolroom? Does that little but heroic band of our own in India neglect the school? Have we no schools in Jamaica, or Caffraria, or Calabar, in which our other missionaries so nobly labour? As a general rule, have not the ministers of the Christian Churches advanced into the mission field with the gospel in their heart, and

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their right hand and their left filled with the lower instruments of civilization? But if these methods are to be called in question, and if a depreciatory distinction is to be drawn, in home work, between preaching and worship to the disparagement of the former,¹ and in foreign, between the pulpit and the school; I shall magnify my office and say, that while in the internal life and action of our Churches, the service of song and prayer must always hold a prominent and honourable place, it is nothing else than ritualistic sentimentality, if it be not an apology for incompetence, to bring it into the front, and say that worship is before instruction in the service of the sanctuary. Worship is not a thing of seasons or places, but a life and a habit of life; and, in the very nature of

¹ "Prayer is my speaking to God in behalf of the people; preaching is my speaking to the people on behalf of God. At first sight, the former would seem to be the more solemn and awful exercise of the two; and in one view, as regards the awful majesty of the august Being whom I address, and the responsibility which we, the people and the pastor, incur as to addressing Him aright, it may be admitted to be so. But in another view, the reverse may be seen to hold true. To be the mouthpiece of my fellow-men in their appealing to God, is not really so delicate and difficult a function as, if I adequately conceive of its meaning and issues, to be the mouthpiece of my God in His appealing to them."—
DR. CANDLISH: *Address to Students.*

things, must be carried on as much at the fireside and in the closets of God's people, as in their solemn assemblies. But the preaching of the gospel is of necessity a work of seasons and public gatherings, and it is not less the result of the healthy instincts of our faith than it is in harmony with the grand aim of Church life, that preaching occupies with us the foremost place in our assemblies. And while the world lasts, may it continue so to do! And with respect to the extension of the gospel into heathen lands, the pre-eminence of preaching over every other instrument, over the best appointed schools we could organize, rests both on experience and the unalterable nature of the work. Teaching, like water, only rises to its own level. And the most earnest efforts have never yet succeeded to lead nations to Christ by the instructions of the common school. And never can succeed. The grand object of the missionary enterprise is to bring the life of Christ into the life of Christ's men. We do not advance the banner of the Cross in the name of civilization, but in the great name of Christ. We are civilizers, but it is by God's method and not man's. We seek to change the springs of life, in the assurance that, if these be salted with the salt of the gospel, a healthy and natural civilization will issue forth.

We seek to save the souls of the lost, and to raise up a race whose hearts shall be at peace with God. And we know no better method, no method which reaches by a shorter road the great end we seek, than that method by which Paul laid the foundation, amid the corruptions of the Roman empire, of the Christian civilization we are enjoying now, and by which Wesley and Whitefield raised the degraded miners of England and Scotland into Christian worshippers and men—the old, royal, all-blessed method of manifesting the truth of the Cross to the consciences of men.

The greatest problem submitted to the Church at present, is the reclaiming of the masses. Can we reasonably hope for any success in this work, if we suffer preaching to become a secondary part of the service? To degrade the sermon is to dethrone the means by which congregations are to be roused to such work. The people need to be stirred up, and vehemently, and with burning earnestness exhorted to undertake such work. But if, where this burning energy of appeal and enforcement ought to be, there is, over a large surface of the force available for Christian enterprise among the poor, only a handful of the dry bones of preaching, only an apology for the ordinance, only a bit of cold, sing-song stuffing, to

fill up the last ten or fifteen minutes of the service how can this available force—the people of Christ in such Churches—be ever moved to lay hands to such work?

I diminish nothing of the respect due to other agencies. Least of all do I diminish aught from the honour due to the public praises or prayers of the Church. I hold in everlasting honour the school and the schoolmaster. I will not tire of mentioning John Knox's great boon to his native land in this very direction. I remember also the importance of societies, and the high place due to the organization of Christian activity and usefulness in the Church. And I will freely admit that, in its manifold life, there is ample scope for the play of the excitement of special assemblies and extraordinary methods. But these all wait on preaching. This is the King's daughter, all glorious within and without. The rest are "the virgins—her companions that follow her."

V.

PREACHERS AND SERMONS.

“It is still another advantage of the institution of preaching, that it tends to secure that religion shall be made a subject of regular study, of deep, prolonged thought, in some part of the community. . . . It is an important thing, that there should be a good number of men, constrained by their office and duty as teachers, to apply their minds intensely and assiduously to the subject. . . . The subject is thus kept before men’s minds in a fuller, clearer, larger form ; it is not suffered to dwindle in men’s view to a slight, scanty, superficial thing.”—*John Foster.*

ALTHOUGH my subject throughout has been Preaching, rather than Preachers, it may be well, before I close, to cast forward some of the lights we have been examining on those who are engaged in the work, and see what manner of men they require to be, and what sort of sermons they should preach.

I assume that the preacher is himself a Christian. He has lain before the Cross for his own sins, and is now not his own, but Christ’s. He is identified with all the purposes of the gospel he proclaims. He lives for their fulfilment. If this initial requirement of life and consecration be wanting,

there is, there can be, no vocation to the ministry of the word.

After one of our colliery accidents, a few years ago, and when the dead bodies were being brought to the surface, one of the miners engaged in that work found himself unable to make his way with his sad burden over the top of the "fall," because he had to carry his Davy lamp in the hand he required to climb with. "I couldn't catch hold of the stuff at the side, to get up to the top ; so, then, I put the dead man's hand through the ring of the lamp, and then I used my hand I had been carrying the lamp with, to lay hold of the stuff at the side ; and so, with my corpse carrying the lamp to light us, I got over, and brought up the body." I have no doubt that God sometimes uses the words of unconverted men for light to His people. But, in such cases, it is a lamp held up in a dead man's hand.

It is as natural as it is essential to the Christian preacher, that he have faith in the word he utters. He is baptized into the truth and spirit of it. It is his own best joy, his strength, his light, and his hope. He knows no other word to put beside it, or to supplement it by, which can meet the needs of the human soul and society. "Literature," "science," "philosophy," he knows in their own

spheres, and respects. But the life of whatever is good in them and in all other influences at work to mould men into a better shape, is felt by him, in relation to his work, to be only the light they have received from the "word" entrusted to his stewardship and ministry. For him there is no truth-power in the world but one, none central as this is, none to turn souls to God, none to develop the life of God in the soul, none to carry that life into all the activities of human existence but one, and that one is the gospel he has been set apart to teach.

It is one of the nearest and plainest needs, that the preacher should be a man intellectually competent to his work. He has to deal with great and difficult problems. He should possess the capacity to understand these problems. He is the steward of a truth which claims to be the lord over all other truths. He should at least be able to see the bearings and inter-relations of other truths with his own. He has to interpret a fixed formula of truth into the language of his own time, and show its application in circumstances which are never the same in different generations; and only one who has gift of insight and reach of thought can accomplish this task.

He should be a man able to assert a perfect

freedom of speech. He should have force of character enough to allow no man, or set of men, to come between him and the full utterance of his testimony. Over all the field the word covers he should claim freedom to range ; and of all things which that word is fitted to accomplish, and with which it has to do, he should have courage to speak.

The wider and more many-sided his sympathies are, the fitter will he be for his work. He has to consider the difficulties, temptations, hardships, prejudices, sins, social position, upbringing, mental and moral capacity of the infinitely various mass of life amid which he labours, and put himself in friendly relations with every soul he seeks to benefit. What George Fox prayed for, he also prays for,—That God would baptize his heart into the sense of all conditions, so that he might be able to enter into the needs and sorrows of all.

But there is yet one more requirement, without which even these would, for this work, be insufficient. This other and indispensable requirement is proper training for the work. Wide-spread, and still spreading at the present moment, is the fatal heresy which, practically, is the denial of the need of training for the work ; and the underrating of the difficul-

ties of preaching. If this grave error were compelled to clothe itself in words, it would be a statement to this effect, "that preaching is a task which any thoroughly earnest Christian may undertake, and in which, with moderate pains, he is very likely to succeed." I hope no one will do me the injustice to suppose that I would refuse to any Christian man, whom God might specially endow, a place in the work-field for the exercise of this gift. Least of all do I intend to imply, in what I am about to say, that there may not be a very ample space, and, in some spheres, a very urgent demand, for a lay agency to do this work. I do not doubt, I dare not doubt, that God may still, as He has often done, use such agents to minister in the word. To the very fullest extent I acknowledge that this high gift of preaching may, on rare occasions, be conferred, as the Pentecostal tongues were, on unofficial and unlearned men. But after all these acknowledgments,—when I come to look at the gift as it has to be exercised in the ordinary circumstances of the Church, and to consider the unalterable conditions which must be fulfilled before true preaching can exist,—I must protest, in the name of the high ends which it is intended to serve, against the spurious imitations of it by incompetent and utterly ungifted men, by raw

lads, novices often, with which we have been only too familiar in religious meetings of a sensational character, which have obtained countenance of late.¹

Preaching, besides being God's great ordinance for instructing men in righteousness, is on its human side an art, and, like every art, requires both native gift and practice. It is something more than mere eloquence. No quantity of platform or other public speaking could ever amount to preaching. Preaching is the exposition of the truth that saves, by one's own experience of that truth. Like the old prophets, the preacher eats the roll on which his message is written. His own soul must have fed on the food he is to offer to others. Preaching is therefore the utterance of the experience of hearts which have been in living contact with the word. It is not only, "I believe, therefore I speak;" it is also, "I live, therefore I speak." True preaching is the outcome of the new life in the soul of the preacher—in the most absolute sense, a new thing. Fresh, new, supplied to the preacher by the Spirit out of the fountains of

¹ Of one of this class who had been allowed to fill an Orkney pulpit one Sabbath, a sagacious elder reported—"that the lad was more willinger than qualifeeder."

the word, and should come forth from his lips as springs do on the mountain-sides, fresh from the hand of God.

When the cholera was last at Paris, a young medical man devoted himself to test, by personal contact and experience, the actual power of the disease. He slept beside his patients. He pierced their veins and tasted their blood. He became a martyr to his heroic task. The mystery which that Parisian youth wished to unlock was the power of an unknown disease. The perilous paths down which he travelled to his purpose lay in intercourse with the disease itself. There is a wide contrast between the labours to which God has called the ministers of His word, and those undertaken by that youth. Whereas he had to sit by the wells of death and drink of their deadly flow, we sit by the wells of salvation and drink of their life-giving stream. But in one thing, there is the most absolute resemblance. We must ourselves taste the life-blood of the Saviour who died for us, before we can offer its cleansing to others. We must have put our own lips to the pierced side of Emmanuel, before we are able to say—"Taste and see that God is good." The power to speak the truth in love,—which is the very glory of preaching,—can only be acquired by living

contact of heart to heart with Him. But for all that—although the preacher must speak out of his experience—preaching is not the mere telling of experience.

It is the manifestation of God's truth to the consciences of men. It is this specifically—this above all things else. And although a man can never rise to the Divine art, whose own soul has not experienced the truth, what he requires to experience includes all the breadth of the written word. Over that wide field his steps are to expatiate, from that ample storehouse his hands are to gather truths new and old ; and then, as God shall give him vital knowledge of them and power, he will declare them to his flock. An unlearned man cannot do this. This requires thought, practice of intellect, reading, insight, grasp, education, special training. And very especially it requires insight, grasp, and scholarly equipment to work in the field and study the statements, facts, and principles of the written word. And in asserting this, I stand up for no caste privilege, no mystic superiority as successors to the apostles, but only for this plain common-sense fact, that only a man who has given his life to the study of God's word, and has broadly and deeply considered it, is fitted to unfold its secrets to others. There may be the

gift of uttering an excited oration, and the power of using, in a certain telling way, the great words of the Bible, "death," "judgment," and "eternity," and along with that no element of real preaching. And with the very best of such speakers, and in their nearest approach to the art, it is only the playing on one among the numerous chords, which God means to be stirred together and in harmony, when the breath of His Spirit sweeps in upon His heritage by real preaching.

But I am bound to add—after saying what I have said, it would not be honest if I were failing to add—that the mere circumstance of having had a training in the schools and halls of the Church will not secure, even to a Christian and gifted man, the power to build up a Church at home, or gather in the heathen abroad, if he either make this work of preaching secondary in his labours, or present his sermons in an unattractive form. Bear with me, therefore, own-brothers in this task, if I make appeal to you. Ours is the great arm of a Church's strength. If she should be weak here, she is everywhere weak; her work as a Church must be vitiated to the very extremities. In vain her missionary contributions; in vain her church building; in vain the meetings of her Assemblies and Synods, if there be not in the pulpits we fill, and

both at home and abroad, an earnest and attractive ministry. For myself, I believe that preaching is our great work, and apart from our own spiritual life, sermon-making our most central duty. I am not ashamed of sermons, nor of sermon writing. I hold with him who said, he would rather preach the gospel than be the angel who blows the last trumpet. I know no work higher. There is none I would exchange with it. I only wish I could describe, as emphatically as I perceive it, the place which the preparation of the sermon should have in our regard. It should be our main current of thought. The thoughts, the reading, the conversation, the prayers, the sufferings, the sorrows, the joys, the sympathies of the week, and of the life, should run naturally into it. What a noble medium it is for thought! How easily it admits the highest and the homeliest we can bring. The simplest and lovingest heart, if learned in the Scriptures, may pipe on this reed. It is an organ through which the thoughts of the mightiest intellect may roll. Think of it with reference to those who are to hear. It is thought and reading to at least half of every congregation. It is suggestion and spur to the other half.

What a delight to ourselves to listen to a really

good sermon! How deeply we thank the man who preaches it! Let it be our ambition to compose such sermons. Let us give our best and freshest and most sustained thought to the work. Up to the height of our capacity let us build the glorious structure. Let us spare no labour to put in goodly and polished stones. Let our work glow as the walls of the New Jerusalem which it helps to build, and in its foundations may our people be enabled to see the beryl and the amethyst, the sardius and the topaz of all Christian truth. I do not mean, that we are to make them elaborate, learned, argumentative, massy, and all that we intend when we use such words. I mean simply, that we are to put our best into them. As Christ did, when he sat by the well of Samaria and preached to the ungentle woman there. As God did, when He made the song of the lark, and taught the bees to murmur among the flowers.

We are speakers for God. And it is due to Him to make our sermons the best we can. It is not a wrong ambition to make them beautiful, even as works of art. They *are* works of art. It is our week's poem, and we are the poets. John Foster went out daily to look for illustrations. Why should not we? Bring fresh views from Scripture, fresh facts from the land of sacred story,

fresh lights from criticism, fresh principles from exegesis. Bring all that Bible-skill and scholarship can supply. But, also, bring the sunlight and the starlight; bring the waves and the winds; bring sowing and reaping; bring the corn and the barley; bring ships and seas; bring pilots and passengers, and lands far and lands near, and rainbows and setting suns, and morning and evening into your sermons as you can. Come sometimes into the pulpit with the fresh breath of summer blowing through all your words—sometimes with the thunder psalm of winter. Let the people know by the texture of your sermon that you love God so well, that the very grass is dear to you for His sake. Make them sometimes feel the smell of the hay-field, and sometimes see the bloom of the apple-trees. All nature is a parable to him who has eyes to see. And do not scorn to use what of this parable lies about your feet. I know a Preacher who brought the hens and the chickens He had seen running about His mother's door, and the piece of silver she had lost, and the candle she had searched for it with, and her joy when she found it, and the number of loaves in her cupboard, and the arrival of strangers at night when there was nothing to give them, and things as little as these into His sermons. And they were no

longer little but holy, and, enshrined in His sermons, became beautiful for ever.

The Great Teacher shows what a heart of hospitality there is in a sermon. It likes to receive reports of our voyages and journeys, and what we saw on the road and what we heard. It has places for all the sweet things in our reading, all the happy things in our conversation, all the good stories we hear. Fling them in by a wise method into this crucible, and they will come out gold. Make the poets sing for you, and the painters paint for you, and the historians search out illustrations from the past. And this is the blessing to a workman who himself has been at the Cross of Jesus, that whilst he works in all these supplies, he counts them nothing in comparison with the story they are intended to illustrate. He keeps his own eye, and he strives to keep the eyes of the people, fixed on the Central Figure to which there are only background and foreground, side-lights, and little plays of thought. These things to him are but "the framework of silver:" Christ crucified is for ever "the apples of gold."

And there is this added blessing. Resisting the thousand-shaped temptation to be satisfied with a slight doing of the work of the pulpit, the true worker is saved from falling into the snare of

making his sermon *mere* works of art. He does not forget that his sermons are not the end, but the means to the end, for which we have been set apart. Ever he works in the love and light of the Divine purposes in preaching. His sermons are sculptor-strokes, each stroke reaching deeper into the revealed word, and nearer to the Form of that Saviour whom he is set to commend ; or sword-strokes, each of which is aimed at some human prejudice, wrong affection, or sin which keeps that Form out of the heart : or home-calls addressed to the wanderers and the weary ; or invitations to service ; or consolations in sorrow ; or alarms to the careless. In every sermon he exhibits and seeks the Divine purpose. Even the arrow shot at a venture, the word spoken to an unknown audience, is charged with a possible fulfilment of this purpose. And he never rises to speak for the Master, without the consciousness of that Master's purpose, announced or unannounced, present in his mind, and intensely and supremely aimed at in all his words. And I am sure he never sits down, with whatever earnestness, fulness, and pointedness he may have spoken, without remembering, that one may plant and another water, but it is only God can give the increase.

To you, my honoured brethren of the eldership,

to you, deacons and church managers, who have been assenting to my words, and are even now casting over in your minds the thought that it would be a happy day for the Church if such sermons as I have described were preached—I have this one little word to say: This work of preaching can only be rightly done under conditions that are human. We have been hearing of late, that some are set to do it under conditions which are inhuman. The greatest genius for preaching who ever lived could not long preach with power, if he had to compose his sermons with the wolf at the door. The wolf is at the door of hundreds of our ministers. I demand your immediate interest and sympathy in the correction of this grievous wrong. When you meet in your Church courts, let the first question of each of you be—Have I been indifferent to the wolf at my own minister's door? And be in the van among those generous spirits, who have set themselves to liberate from such unjust harassments, the suffering ministers of the Church.

Possess your souls with the great fact, take it into your heart of hearts and ponder it,—that if the Christian Church is to be a land flowing with milk and honey for our social life, it can only be that by the instrumentality of free, unburdened preaching; but if this be refused to her, if the spirit of the churl

should prevail to crush out the spirit of justice and liberality which has begun to stir; and if men should continue to be set to do this difficult work with a care-weight hanging about their necks,—then, by the operation of an inevitable retribution, this fair heritage, of which you are the honoured overseers, shall lose its milk and its honey, and be overspread with weeds, and thistles shall grow instead of wheat, and cockle instead of barley.

And, O my brethren, my fellows in this work, and O Christ's people everywhere,—stir up your imaginations, I pray you, until you see and realize the high and supreme place which preaching has in the extension of God's kingdom upon earth. Its history is the history of all that is glorious in the past; its fortunes are the fortunes of all that can bless mankind in the future. And I think there never was a moment in its history when a more glorious opportunity was opened to it than now. That was a glorious opportunity when it took its departure from the gates of Jerusalem, and poured forth on its sublime mission, along the highways which the Roman empire had prepared,—carrying into every country the wondrous story of the Cross; finding, wherever it went, prepared groups of Jewish worshippers and proselytes ready to receive it; leavening these groups with its own life, until the

groups grew into Churches and the Churches became a power in the world, and the things that were disappeared, and a new world came into their place. But behold it at this moment ! It stands at the gateways of all the earth. Highways more numerous, more open, more far-reaching than old Rome's are lying ready for its use. Groups and colonies of the Anglo-Saxon race, more hungry for the word, more ready to receive and extend it than the synagogues to which the apostles made their first appeal, are scattered over all the world. A thousand approaches lead from these into the territories of the heathen. The heathen races are sick of their worn-out creeds. Is this astounding conjunction of circumstances an accident ? Have these highways been prepared by chance ? Have those groups of Christian life been scattered along so many points for nothing ? Has God no purpose in spreading, as He has done, our English speech over every clime, or in carrying our commerce to every shore ? Or is this the blessed secret underlying all,—that in these very things He is calling us to recognise the new highways He has prepared for the preaching of the Cross ? O blessed Church, who shall understand the secret of the Lord, and send her messengers forth in troops ? For all such Churches a glory shines in the future. I see their

divisions healed. I hear the stir of their activities at home. I see the fruits of their beneficence abroad. Their preachers are carrying the word along all these highways to every people and kindred and tongue. Oh happy, happy time, advance ! Come, blessed age, when each day that dawns shall awaken the inhabitants of earth to peaceful industries, and to thoughts and words which have been baptized into Christ ; when every Sabbath shall see a light, more blessed than its own, rising and breaking forth from the pulpits of a thousand lands, touching, as it flows, the hearts of Christian congregations, and kindling them into song. Come, come quickly, happiest time ! and this round earth, with all its tribes, healed of its ancient wound, and like a child in newness of life, shall lie at the feet of God, wrapped in the blessedness of "the people who know the joyful sound."

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